

هكذا من الاصل



THE INDEPENDENT

Nº 3,376

FRIDAY 15 AUGUST 1997

WEATHER: Warm and sunny

(R 45p) 40p

INSIDE
THE ONLY FULL OFFICIAL
UCAS A-LEVEL LISTINGS
56-PAGE SUPPLEMENT TODAY

PLUS: THE INDEPENDENT'S
£2.5 MILLION STUDENT PROMOTION
DAY TWO: YOUR CHANCE TO GET MARIE CLAIRE, LOADED
NME AND OTHER MAGAZINES AT REDUCED PRICES
See page 37 of UCAS listings (open only to UCAS applicants)

Private drivers facing M-way ban

Randeep Ramesh
Transport Correspondent

Private motorists could be banned from parts of Britain's motorways - including London's orbital M25 - under radical proposals being studied by ministers. At busy times, clogged lanes would be kept only for buses and lorries.

A government consultation paper, called "What Role for Trunk Roads in England?", says bluntly that in order to unclog the M25, which can see 200,000 cars a day on the busiest stretches, ministers are prepared to consider "limiting access to the most congested parts of the network, access control at peak periods, high-occupancy lanes, including bus or heavy-goods-vehicle-only lanes, perhaps using the hard shoulder..."

As revealed yesterday morning, similar plans are being studied for Birmingham's heavily congested M6. But this may be only the start. Options include shutting down stretches of road to through-traffic and adopting a US-style scheme under which only cars with more than two passengers are allowed to pass.

The idea will go down badly with hundreds of thousands of commuters in the Midlands and the South-east. The report states that "although the M25 accounts for only about 6 per cent of the mileage of the motorway network, it carries 14 per cent of all motorway traffic".

In order to stop cars from joining congested sections of motorway, motorists could be forced to wait on slip roads until a traffic-jam subsides. Alternatively, electronic signs could be used to tell drivers not to use bus or lorry-only lanes.

More complicated systems use video technology to spot cars with only one occupant and fine drivers who persist in using multi-occupancy lanes.

The plans were attacked by motorists' organisations. "These plans need careful consideration. If you restrict access to motorways people will just drive on to local roads - which are not designed to carry these

loads," said Edmund King, a spokesman for the RAC.

"As for using the hard shoulder - that could be extremely dangerous. We would not want to see those lanes blocked off when the emergency services need to get to stranded motorists," added Mr King.

Other roads in the Midlands may also face draconian measures in order to restrain traffic.

Ministers have noted that "the M40, and parts of the M42, which it feeds, has experienced growth of 50 per cent between 1991 and 1996, compared with a national rate of 12 per cent."

The most congested stretch of motorway lies on the M6 - where daily flows can top 150,000 vehicles a day. The motorway already uses a complicated "ramp-metering" system - which prevents traffic joining the M6 if the traffic flow is not "smooth". This means that when a jam looms, a traffic-light stops vehicles from joining the motorway.

But with an ever-increasing number of cars using the motorway, the consultation document states that "consideration could also be given to limiting access to the most congested parts of the motorway network..."

Ministers are aware that the restrictions will not please big business and have made it clear that the measures will not drastically affect "strategic, commercial and industrial traffic passing through the region".

A spokesman for the Department of Environment, Transport and the Regions said that none of the options outlined were "new".

"We are not ruling anything in or out at present," he added.

The Government is anxious to reconcile two competing aims: that of the motorist's freedom and the need to prioritise public transport.

Next week will see the beginning of the consultation on the Government's much-vaunted "integrated transport policy" - which should outline ministers' ideas on how to move people from their cars to public transport.

The scramble intensifies for last free places at university



Earlier this week, Mrs Clare Cooper wrote to us, pointing out quite correctly that 'Each year, on publication of the A-level results, the front page of every broadsheet pictures jubilant young women laughing and hugging

each other. While of course they look beautiful, we've had this each year for about a decade. As concern grows about the decline in young men's school achievement and motivation, could we, this year, have

some photos of young men similarly celebrating?' Fair dos. But it hasn't been easy. First, as the writer pointed out, young men often have less to celebrate. And second, when they do, a modest shrug, a glare at

the ground and the ghost of a smirk is all you mostly get. But we've done our best, Mrs Cooper. These young men were receiving their results at Parliament Hill School, north London, yesterday. Photograph: Nicola Kurtz

Lucy Ward
and Judith Judd

The race for the last free university places began in earnest yesterday after more than 190,000 applicants for the 310,000 places available had their offers confirmed.

Late entries to the clearing process are up by 40 per cent, suggesting that some candidates may be applying this year rather than next to avoid paying tuition fees to be introduced next autumn.

The rise in the A-level pass rate for the 16th successive year will mean that more students will have gained the grades they need, leaving fewer places up for grabs.

On Wednesday, the Government announced that students who have already applied for a university place but decided to defer entry and take a gap year would be exempt from fees.

But Baroness Blackstone, the education minister, confirmed yesterday that those who had not already applied and intended to do so during

the next 12 months would have to pay fees. So far there have been 9,753 late entries, compared with 6,944 at the same time last year.

That trend, which would mean an additional 10,000 entries by the end of the clearing process, might not continue if students decide the competition will be too tough this year.

Tony Higgins, chief executive of the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service, said there was room within universities for places for the 10,000 but the picture would

change if the 20,000 students who usually drop out of clearing each year decided to stay on because of fees. "That could be more than universities could cope with and we could see people who might otherwise have found a place not doing so."

As more than a quarter of a million A-level students received their grades yesterday, *The Independent's* table of high-performing comprehensives was topped by a former secondary modern in the shadow of two major public schools. Pupils studying

two or more A-levels at Chase High School in Malvern, neighbour of the mighty Malvern College and Malvern Girls' College, gained an average of 22.1 points each - the equivalent to two Bs and a C.

The Independent contacted 200 top state comprehensive schools yesterday for their results. The table is a good guide to their performance, but is not definitive. The results show that, as last year, high-performing comprehensives outstrip many grammar schools. Best performing schools, page 6

I'm not undressing for you'

The Wrong
Correspondent

Attending a political lecture at Millbank was an exciting prospect: political types in sharp suits, some minders, and of course Peter Mandelson, who's set to reveal important plans to save the underclass. Sounds very high powered. So why does everyone look so bored?

The front six rows are made up of beautifully designed chairs, the most important people sit here, just like at fashion shows. Behind them is a row of television cameras. Then I realise, it's all for show, this conference lark. Beyond the cameras, the chairs are not fab by all, just standard. The rest of us are back here, fidgeting and slouching in the heat, all waiting for Mandelson.

In he walks, Blair's right-hand man. I expect a frisson of excitement through the crowd, but it doesn't happen. The lecture starts. I furiously start writing notes, Mandelson sounds so passionate. I look up. No one else is writing. Why? Comprehension dawns. The speech: I have a copy of it in my hands.

I indulge in some people watching. I begin with Mandelson who has obviously

been picking up on the latest catwalk trends. He wore a single breasted charcoal grey suit, (the BIG colour for Autumn), with power shoulders (these too are back), a red tie, and an off-white shirt with neat collars. His trousers were wide legged (ten points); but had a turn-up (minus five points). Shoes were well polished black brogues, and hair was well done. I decided he looked like a cross between George Hamilton and Griff Rhys Jones. In all, top marks.

As for the rest of the room they were a sorry lot. Men in crumpled suits stare into space. One man even falls asleep. The

women look good though: lots of power bobs and pretty dresses.

Meanwhile, Mandelson is talking about the underclass. He wants the Government to create higher standards in schools and colleges, and a Welfare to Work programme for the long term unemployed. The sleepy man wakes up.

After the lecture Mandelson makes to leave. He is surrounded by the front row (this happens at fashion shows too). I shuffle up slightly.

"Can I ask you a fun question?"

"Yes," he replies.

"Where did you get that suit from, it's very nice?"

"What's that got to do with social reform?" he smirks.

"Nothing," I say. "I just wondered." He turns to an aide and asks: "I got it somewhere boring didn't I, somewhere near Blackfriars?" I ask to see the label. I'm not expecting Gucci, but possibly Savile Row. "I'm not going to undress for you," he says.

With that I walked out into the sunshine thinking: it's probably from Next.

Why Wait 'Til 98

For vacancies
on courses
starting in
September '97
call JMU
Freephone
NOW

0500 564 565

SCIENCE & ENGINEERING COURSES

0500 565 566

ALL OTHER COURSES

Internet: <http://www.livjm.ac.uk>
Email: recruitment@livjm.ac.uk



JMU

Liverpool John Moores University

TRIUMPHAL MARCH OF A NATION: FIFTY YEARS OF INDIAN INDEPENDENCE

PAGE 3



£12m football deal halts Continental drift

Paul Newman

The wave of expensive overseas players into English football may be beginning to turn today with the sale of Steve McManaman from Liverpool to Barcelona for £12m.

The England international was in Barcelona, yesterday, having talks with the Spanish club, who are offering a six-year contract worth more than

£30,000 a week. This would at least double the player's current wages.

The move would be the second most expensive transfer involving an English club, following Alan Shearer's £15m transfer from Blackburn to Newcastle last year.

Barcelona have plenty of money available to spend on players following the departure of their Brazilian

international, Ronaldo, to Internazionale, who have had to pay £18m simply to buy out the player's contract and have yet to agree a transfer fee. The Ronaldo deal is already a world record.

The Spanish club are keen to complete the transfer of McManaman by midnight tonight, which is the deadline for registering players to play in this season's European Champions

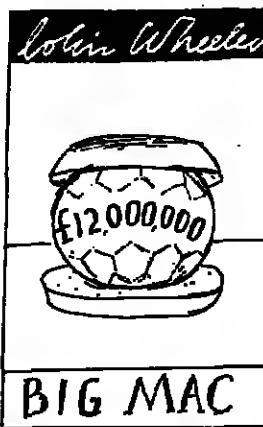
League. He has been watched in Liverpool's first two games of the season by Bobby Robson, the former England manager who is now general manager of Barcelona.

McManaman, aged 25, has been with Liverpool since leaving school. He has established himself as one of the English game's greatest creative talents, although there is a feeling that he has not quite realised his

undoubtedly huge potential this year.

It is understood that Roy Evans, the Liverpool manager, has not opposed the sale of McManaman. The £12m will be available for him to spend on new players and last night the club were already lining up a £3m deal to recruit the Internazionale central defender, Massimo Paganini.

Reports, page 24



9 770951 946450

QUICKLY
Curbs on dental care
NHS dental treatment could be limited to check-ups for all except children, the poor and the elderly under plans being studied by ministers. Page 7

THE BROADSHEET
Business & City...16-18
Comment...13-15
Foreign News...10-11
Home News...2-10
Gazette...12
Leading articles...13

Letters...13
Shares...19
Sport...21-24
THE TABLOID
Arts...67
Architecture...8

Classical...16-18
Concise crossword...22
Listings...20-21
Pop...10-12
Radio & TV...23-24
Style...45
Weather...22

Read The
Independent on the
World Wide Web
<http://www.independent.co.uk>

indian independence 50 years on

Triumphal march of a nation

Jubilee party fills the streets with pride

Peter Popham
New Delhi
Anwar Iqbal
Islamabad

As they laboriously criss-cross New Delhi's vast boulevards and endless triumphal vistas, many visitors must have asked themselves: what on earth is it all for? Last night the answer was provided: for events like this.

As the Golden Jubilee of India's independence got under way with a huge March of the Nation last night, the ceremonial heart of Lutyens's imperium was transformed into a sea of celebrating people.

Eight stages have been erected, punctuating the lawns that flank Rajpath, formerly Kingsway, Delhi's gigantic answer to London's Mall. Twenty-eight teams of dancers from different parts of the country did their stuff during the early evening as the crowds began to build.

Then at 9pm prompt the March of the Nation was flagged off from the east end of the boulevard. Hundreds of freedom fighters, veterans of the struggle against Britain who are now in their 80s and 90s, have been brought to Delhi for the celebration. To the shame of the government, many have been accommodated in the most primitive lodgings, without beds and sharing two lavatories among 70 people.

But last night that typically Indian failure was forgotten as 74 Indian-made jeeps bore the freedom fighters in the van of the procession, leading some 15,000 people representing all regions and religions of the country towards the grand climax, a show of music, lasers and



Grand ceremony: All India gloried in its independence yesterday - "We just want to rejoice ... It's like when you get married". Photograph: Raghu Rai, Beauty Bath for Bride-to-be

fireworks in front of the Presidential Palace.

In the far north-east of the country, at a place called Silaibari in Assam, seven people were killed when a bomb planted by secessionists exploded under a train. Nobody claimed responsibility, but militant members of the Bodo tribe, one of a number of ethnic groups in the North-east fighting to break away from India, have called for strikes and boycotts to mark the 50th anniversary of India's own independence.

In Pakistan, too, the celebrations were marred by violence. A violent riot erupted in Karachi after police fired on surging crowds celebrating Pakistan's 50th anniversary, and two young men were killed.

Thousands of people had gathered outside the tomb of the nation's founder, Mohammed Ali Jinnah, in a colourful ceremony that quickly turned from jubilant to violent. Soon after a speech by Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, in which he appealed to Pakistan's people

to put an end to violence racking the nation, police moved in with batons to disperse the crowd. Enraged, several people took off their shoes and began throwing them at police guards. One officer sprayed bullets into the crowd.

Mr Sharif used a flag-raising ceremony in Islamabad to issue a fresh call for peace with India and a solution to the 50-year-old Kashmir dispute, one of the legacies of partition. "I hope that India would also respond with the same sincerity by

withdrawing its forces from occupied Kashmir and putting an end to atrocities there and hence pave the way for establishment of lasting peace in the region," he declared.

The Indian government, in a reminder of the divide between the two nations, accused Pakistan of developing nuclear warheads for medium-range missiles. India and Pakistan have fought three wars since 1947; hundreds of thousands died in the aftermath of partition, and millions were uprooted.

Just before midnight last night, MPs and other dignitaries were to gather for a nationally televised re-enactment of the historic sitting of India's constituent assembly on 14 August 1947. They were to hear a recording of the famous "tryst with destiny" speech delivered by India's first Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru in which he called for an end to "poverty and ignorance and disease and inequality of opportunity."

Yesterday in Delhi, on a balmy night cooled by heavy rain the day before, the dominant mood was serenity and pride. The city centre has been filled with flags and strings of marigolds and greenery, and all the prominent buildings have been thrown into brilliant silhouette by banks of lighthouses.

For one evening the nation's problems are forgotten. "This is really the first such event in our history," a spectator at Rajpath said. "We are so happy, we really do not know what to do. We just want to rejoice, it's just like when you get married."

Fate in one man's hands

WH Auden had largely abandoned political verse after the Second World War, but he returned to it in the aftermath of Indian and Pakistani independence. His 1948 poem on partition comments on the decisions taken by British officials in the name of political expediency, which were followed by hundreds of thousands of deaths.

Partition

By W H Auden

Unbiased at least he was when he arrived on his mission. Having never set eyes on this land he was called to partition between two peoples. Ironically at odds, with their different diets and incompatible gods. 'Time', they had briefed him in London, 'is short, it's too late for mutual reconciliation or rational debate. The only solution now lies in separation. The Viceroy thinks, as you see from his letter, that the less you are seen in his company the better. So we've arranged to provide you with other accommodation. We can give you four judges, two Moslem and two Hindu. To consult with, but the final decision must rest with you.'

Shut up in a lonely mansion, with police night and day. Patrolling the gardens to keep assassins away. He got down to work, to the task of settling the fate of millions. The maps at his disposal were out of date. And the Census Returns almost certainly incorrect. But there was no time to check them, no time to inspect contested areas. The weather was frightfully hot. And a bout of dysentery kept him constantly on the toilet. But in seven weeks it was done, the frontiers decided. A continent for better or worse divided.

The next day he sailed for England, where he quickly forgot the case, as a good lawyer must. Return he would not. Afraid, as he told his Club that he might get shot.

Saga of Mahatma memorial shows spiritual father has no place in people's hearts

Peter Popham
in New Delhi

Mohandas Gandhi is invariably described as the father of the Indian nation. Only the reckless take his name in vain: when a campaigner for homosexual rights described him on a television chat show here two years ago as a "bastard grocer", or words to that effect, the show was axed, the executives of Rupert Murdoch's Star television channel made to apologise, parliament went into special session and the outspoken fellow was sued by one of Gandhi's grandsons.

Gandhi's spectral voice was heard in the Central Hall of Delhi's parliament building last night as India celebrated its Golden Jubilee by replaying recordings from the days of the freedom struggle. But the man they call the Mahatma, "Great Soul", was in other ways absent.

After nearly 30 years of bickering, the government still cannot agree on a place in the capital for his statue. And a recent opinion poll in a weekly magazine confirmed what most Indians readily admit: that they no longer have a place for him in their hearts. Of the more than 12,000 people polled, only 14 per cent named Gandhi as a national leader who has inspired them.

Born in 1869 the child of merchants in Gujarat (hence the "grocer" slur), Gandhi broke with caste tradition and sailed to England to become a lawyer. Back in India he was too nervous to speak in court and eked a living as a clerk before sailing to South Africa, where he stayed for more than 20 years. It was there on behalf of the Indian community that he developed the techniques of peaceful protest that he was to employ with such devastating effect against the British in India.



Gandhi: Image of saintliness that people could revere without having to follow

coat he affected in London, to shorts and shirts made from sacks, the shapeless robes of a peasant, and finally to the ultimate simplicity and affront of a homespun loincloth.

Gandhi's adoption of clothing alien to his own class and caste served several purposes. Arriving in Britain for the first time wearing white flannels, he was upset to find himself odd man out. But from then on he turned the embarrassment of inappropriate dress against the Empire. Dressed like a villager, he caused the colonial authorities acute awkwardness, while evoking huge support from the poorest Indians by so vividly declaring solidarity with them.

From his dramatic adoption of the khadi - homespun loincloth - in 1921, in protest at Britain's refusal to grant home rule, Gandhi's obsession deepened and broadened. Everyone should wear khadi, he declared. Wearing khadi could transform

people morally. Conversely, as Tarlo puts it, "foreign cloth was so intrinsically vile that contact with it was physically and mentally defiling".

Filthy, untouchable and "our greatest outward pollution" was how Gandhi described the wearing of foreign clothes. In so doing he brought back the notion of untouchability he had fought against so hard on questions of caste, and alienated many of his supporters among the intelligentsia.

Gandhi's crankiness about clothes was matched by the eccentricity of his political and economic ideas. His bible was Ruskin's *Unto This Last*, a defining work of the late-Victorian reaction against the Industrial Revolution and a plea for the restoration of agrarian values. Gandhi read the book in South Africa and claimed it instantly transformed his life. Ever after, he argued vehemently against Westernisation and modernisation. In his book *Hind Swaraj* (1909) he denounced even such benign imports as railways and doctors. In the process he instilled a deep mistrust of modernity and economic growth which has bogged the nation's development ever since.

Today, as politicians mull over where to put his statue, Gandhi's legacy is in tatters. The rural hamlet of Sevagram in Madhya Pradesh where Gandhi tried to realise his ideal of *swadesh* - self-sufficiency - and *khadi* and some other Gandhian products are still made there. But workers employed by Gandhi's disciples are poorly paid, the alcohol prohibition the community insists on has given nearby bootleggers a roaring trade, while the community's opposition to a steel project planned for the area has consigned the hamlet to backwardness.

"I blame Gandhi," one local graduate told a reporter. "His anti-machinery theory has proved wrong. We have good educational facilities, but no way of generating jobs." Ruskin's prescriptions have proved disastrous in a country as poor as this. Gandhi failed; but his failure was predictable as early as the Twenties when the mass of Indians failed to adopt his beloved homespun as their dress. Instead of converting to his ideas, they made him a sort of mascot - an image of saintliness they could revere without having to follow. Whether he willed it or not, a sort of Christ-like aura came to surround Gandhi, culminating in his murder in 1948 by a fellow Hindu.

Yesterday, while long queues waited to tour the handsome and well-appointed museum devoted to Indira Gandhi, the sad and shabby Mahatma Gandhi Memorial Museum was practically deserted. And now in Delhi, though birds have nests and foxes have holes, the father of India has no place to raise his image.

MERCURY COMMUNICATIONS

CABLE & WIRELESS

HEADS YOU WIN,



TAILS YOU WIN.

GUARANTEED CHEAPER CALL BILLS OR DOUBLE YOUR MONEY BACK.

Now you can really coin it in with Mercury. you don't, we'll refund double the difference. Whether your calls are mostly national or international, you'll make savings against BT. It's your call. You can start by phoning the number below. Now.

In fact, we're so confident that you'll save money on your call bill (even against PremierLine and Friends and Family), that if

Mercury
FreeCall 0500 500 366

Price Pledge terms apply on Mercury SmartCall and UK-Call call bills only, compared against BT's basic rates and discount schemes, excluding line rental and temporary promotional offers. Not available on Calling Card or business packages.

Briton feared drowned in flash-flood

Kim Sengupta

A British woman was missing feared dead yesterday after a freak flash flood while she was hiking in Arizona. Charlotte Warrington, 24, a nursery nurse, was feared drowned with 10 other hikers in an Arizona canyon after a flood sent down an 11-ft wall of water.

Her parents, Brian and Gillian Warrington, were waiting for developments after learning that their daughter Charlotte was missing. Her father, from Yarnfield, Leamington, Warwickshire, said: "She was quite a strong swimmer and this is what we are able to hope for, because we feel that if she had an opportunity, she would have done something."

They were not the only family to suffer tragedy during a holiday. Relatives of student Charlotte Gibb, injured in a shooting which killed her boyfriend, Max Hunter, visited her in hospital in Israel, where she had been holidaying.

Also in US another hiker, from Derbyshire, fell to his death in Yosemite National Park. In the Dominican Re-

public 300 holidaymakers were evacuated from a hotel after it was found guests had contracted typhoid.

The incidents highlighted a spate of fatal and life-threatening incidents that have befallen British holidaymakers. Victims of violence in Cyprus and Hungary spoke yesterday about their experience.

To add to the atmosphere of uncertainty, Egyptian authorities said an Islamic group which massacred 18 Greek tourists outside a Cairo hotel last year had planned more attacks on foreigners.

Ms Gibb, 20, who was shot while hitch-hiking with Mr Hunter, 22, was seen in hospital in Beersheva by her parents, David and Jennifer, and sister Gina, from Lincolnshire. Mr Gibb said: "She is recovering well... She seems to have had a very fortunate escape."

In Yosemite National Park, California, Charles Richards, 67, from Derbyshire, died after falling 50 feet on Sunday. Officials are trying to ascertain what happened.

In the Dominican Republic of Juan Dolio, Thomson

Holidays moved 300 holidaymakers from Diamond Costa Caribe Hotel after three women fell ill with typhoid. Another 85 people were diverted to another resort as a precaution.

The three women were diagnosed as suffering from typhoid after tests in London following their return from the Caribbean.

In Cyprus a woman wept as she gave evidence at the trial of British soldiers accused of attacking her boyfriend at a holiday resort. Clare Harbour, 22, from Lee, south London, said they kicked and punched Barry Ford, 23. The soldiers, stationed in Cyprus with the 1st Battalion King's Regiment, are: Roger Bell, 26; Tim Carter, 27; Steven Wolstencroft, 26; Steven Girvan, 20 and Stuart Spencer, 20. They face charges of grievous bodily harm and actual bodily harm.

The widow of a Christian Aid worker beaten to death in Hungary vowed to return to continue her husband's mission. Jo Pollard, 55, and her husband, Michael, 62, from Baldon, near Bradford, were attacked by robbers while on a trip to deliver literature and clothes.



Masquerade: A member of the Players Company in London rehearsing *The Love of the Nightingale*, a Greek drama which will be performed on the Edinburgh Fringe. The chorus wear mirrored masks and the king and queen gold ones, sculpted by Andrew Logan. Photograph: John Voss

Dixons

sale

STARTS THIS WEEK

SAVE UP TO £100 ON FUJI CAMERAS

FUJI DS-7 DIGITAL CAMERA
• 640 x 480 pixels
• Stores up to 80 images
• Includes 2Mb SmartMedia card
• 18" LCD monitor
• Includes ADOBE PhotoDeluxe software
Was £499.99
SALE PRICE
£399.99
SAVE £100
9 MONTHS INTEREST FREE OPTION

FUJI FOTONEX 200 ADVANCED PHOTO SYSTEM ZOOM CAMERA
• 30-80mm zoom lens
• Active autofocus
• Information exchange
• Date/time backprinting
Was £149.99
SALE PRICE
£129.99
SAVE £20

FUJI FOTONEX 10 ADVANCED PHOTO SYSTEM CAMERA
• Built-in flash
• Autofocus/rewind
• Multiple print format
• Drop-in loading
Was £59.99
SALE PRICE
£29.99
SAVE £5

FUJI FOTONEX 50 ADVANCED PHOTO SYSTEM CAMERA
• Autoflash with 'red-eye' reduction
• Autofocus
• Outfit includes case, album and 2 films
Was £59.99
SALE PRICE
£49.99
SAVE £10

FUJI FOTONEX 100 ADVANCED PHOTO SYSTEM CAMERA
• 'Red-eye' reducing flash
• Drop-in loading
Was £59.99
SALE PRICE
£79.99
SAVE £20

FUJI FOTONEX 400IX ADVANCED PHOTO SYSTEM ZOOM CAMERA
• 25-100mm zoom lens
• Active autofocus
• Information exchange
Was £279.99
SALE PRICE
£229.99
SAVE £50

Dixons

There's a Great Deal going on

PRICE CHECK
Every week we check the prices of hundreds of products in the national press to make sure that Dixons Price Check prices can't be beaten. If you find the same product cheaper locally, we'll be pleased to refund the difference. Just notify us within 7 days of purchase. The product must be new, complete and available for immediate delivery. Mail order prices excluded.

INTEREST FREE OPTION
Account interest free if repaid in full before or with the 9th monthly payment. Terms: Dixons Cash price £259.99, 25% deposit of £64.99, 9 monthly payments of £29.99. 0% INTEREST. Subject to status. Minimum deposit 6% on loans over £1000. Written credit quotations available on request from Dixons, PO Box, Maylands Avenue, Harrow, Middlesex, HA1 1PF. (Applicants must be 18 or over, 21 in Northern Ireland)

29.9%
48 monthly payments of £60.92. (Total repayable £2924.96)

Proust, Dostoevsky? No, simply the holiday diary of a duchess

Jojo Moyes

Students of parody were last night wondering how they could possibly better the efforts of the Duchess of York, who this week publishes her holiday diary in the *Spectator*.

Initial glances at the journal, with its carefree lack of syntax and almost obsessive references to food, led many to suspect a sophisticated, if cruel parody. "Fine trees: nuts. Fig trees: figs (how Alan Bates ate them in *Women in Love*)," begins one section. "Olive trees: olives and oils. Sunflowers: more oils. Grapes: my favourite Cervaro. Pasta: spaghetti, tagliolini, linguine. Meats: Parma ham. With every smell, I smell food. With every sight, I see food. I can almost hear food. I want to spade the whole lot through my mouth at Mach 2. Basta!"

But suspicions were ill-founded. The duchess's office confirmed that it was, in fact, all her own work. As Frank Johnson, editor of the *Spectator*, said yesterday: "No one could forge it."

The diary, he said, had been written by the duchess at his request, and was neither a parody, nor ghost-written. "Like all great writers there are depths of meaning," he said, adding, after a pause, "You have Proust, Dostoevsky... Fergie. If she had a ghost writer it must have been some kind of genius who



Duchess of York: Smells, sees and almost hears food

thinks in her mind."

Indeed, much of it is almost too Fergie-like to be true. She reveals the same talent for self-abasement that emerged from her encounter with television interviewer Ruby Wax, calling herself "ungrateful" and "vain". Her obsession with food, she says, is problematic, as she is meant to be "a paradigm of a weight loser" - perhaps the only thing I am allowed to add to being a loser."

But the duchess is nothing if not resourceful. "A brilliant idea comes to mind from reading *Hello!* I see the Queen of Sweden wearing a T-shirt with

a supermodel figure in a bikini printed on it - maybe Weight-watchers won't notice if I put one on at the launch!"

The duchess is keen, however, that we do not forget her charitable credentials, not least her work with the Motor Neurone Disease Association, for whom she has just held a golf tournament.

"MIND," she explains, "is the most debilitating, devastating, muscle wasting disease... Andrew - steadfastly loyal to me and his Scottish Mutual team - started his victorious round dead on time, having already made sure that he had wished his grandmother a happy birthday in the morning."

There are digressions into childhood reminiscence, insights into family ("Andrew and I believe so much in this new Americanism of co-parenting") and the odd pieces of literary twiddle ("The red, earthy, laterite soil was kicked up as Andrew, Beatrice and Eugenie headed off into the distant Tuscan hills on their way to join HMV Britannia").

Perhaps mindful of her audience, the duchess throws in a couple of cultural references: to Dante - and Simba, from Disney's *The Lion King*. Her new editor is definitely happy with the result. "I knew she would be a good diarist... I'll ask her to write again," says Mr Johnson. "Although we won't be running one every week."

Greer hits out at 'weak' Downey

Christian Wolmar

Ian Greer, the lobbyist at the centre for the cash-for-questions scandal, has criticised Sir Gordon Downey, the Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards, for being too weak to resist media calls to censure the five former Tory MPs involved in the affair.

In his first interview since the publication of Sir Gordon's report last month, Mr Greer says Sir Gordon has left "a lot of questions unanswered".

Sir Gordon found evidence that Neil Hamilton had received cash payments directly from Harrods boss Mohamed Al Fayed.

Mr Greer, who was found to have misled a previous Parliamentary investigation into the relationship between lobbyists

and MPs, said he was "delighted" that he and his now bankrupt lobbying firm had been cleared of acting as "a conduit" for Mr Fayed.

Mr Greer says in the interview that he is "comfortable" with the findings about him and argues that the original allegations that MPs received cash for specifically taking questions were not proved.

But he says: "[Downey] is a distinguished civil servant, but he's not a judge; he's not infallible. He has... arrived at a number of very surprising conclusions in his report." However, it would have "needed a man very much stronger than Sir Gordon Downey to have come down with a report that said: 'No, I do not believe that Hamilton or anyone else behaved wrongly because the atmosphere in which Downey prepared his report was... hot'."

He added: "The media and, indeed, I believe the public, wanted heads and Downey has supplied those heads."

Mr Greer also says he now

sometimes regrets dropping his libel action against *The Guardian*, which had alleged he had arranged for MPs to ask questions in Parliament in exchange for cash and wishes he had never met Mr Fayed or taken him on as a client.

The lobbyist also denies operating a "slush fund" made up of payments from Mr Fayed for the purpose of paying MPs.

Sir Gordon concluded that "there is a strong probability that cash payments, additional to his consultancy fee, were made to Mr Greer, over a period of time..."

The Commons Standards and Privileges Committee agreed earlier this month with Sir Gordon's criticism of four of the five former Tory MPs he censured - Sir Andrew Bowden, Tim Smith, Michael Brown and Sir Michael Grynlls.

It has yet to reach a decision about Mr Hamilton, who has submitted a lengthy rebuttal and will cross-examine him under oath in the Commons at a televised hearing in October.

Men's glossies put Cosmo in slow lane

With sales of over 500,000, *FHM* has overtaken the most popular women's title

Paul McCann
Media Correspondent

A milestone will be passed today in the magazine world when a men's magazine overtakes the best-selling women's glossy *Cosmopolitan* for the first time.

FHM, the glossy lads' magazine, will announce that it is selling over half a million copies an issue. Meanwhile *Cosmopolitan* and its rival *Marie Claire* are expected by the publishing industry to announce that their sales have dropped slightly, leaving them selling around 450,000 copies per issue.

Also likely to be up and gunning for the women's magazines is *Loaded*, the lads' magazine which started the men's publishing revolution.

Only three years ago *FHM* was a sleepy men's fashion magazine selling less than 80,000 copies. But taking its lead from *Loaded*, which mixed humour with plenty of scantily-clad women, *FHM* re-invented itself as a magazine for the New Lad era.

The success of *Loaded* and *FHM* inspired a host of imitators including the straightforward such as *Maxim* to specialist titles like *Ear Soup* and *Men's Health* which all added flesh and irreverence to their editorial mix.

Ten years ago the men's magazine sector did not exist. When *GQ* and *Esquire* were imported from America in the late Eighties they struggled to sell over 50,000 copies. Publishing industry wisdom then was that men would only buy magazines if they were about fishing or cars.

Now these magazines are big business. The last issue of *FHM* sold close to 600,000 copies, bringing EMAP £1.6m in cover price revenue for just one issue. In addition to this *FHM* made £4m in advertising in 1996 and is estimated to top £6m this year. The seven magazines in the men's glossy market are likely to be worth over £80m this year.

The lads' magazines, with their reliance on near-naked

women and obnoxious coverage of sex, have been blamed for wiping out the sales of top-shelf pornographic magazines. Earlier this year WH Smith pulled soft-porn titles from its shelves because they were no longer selling.

Magazine editors believe men's magazines are outpacing women's titles because they have taken risks and invested in innovative journalism: "Women's magazine are stuffed with people who grew up with women's magazines," said Richard Benson, editor of *The Face*, Britain's first style magazine for men and women. "But it is only when you are pushing against the boundaries of a format that you produce good things and if you're steeped in it you're not pushing against it."

Loaded gave a forum to writers from the music press who had been putting out intelligent, funny journalism for years. They helped reinvent the form. Women's magazines think and act in cliché.

Gill Hudson, who edits *Maxim*, believes women's magazines are failing because they are not using humour the way the men's magazines do.

The men credited with the lads' mag phenomenon - James Brown at *Loaded* and Mike Soutar at *FHM* - this year left their creations. James Brown has been charged by Condé Nast with making *GQ* a *Loaded* for men in their Thirties and Mr Soutar has moved to the radio station Kiss FM.

Some industry experts believe that they may have left because they know their 100 per cent per annum sales rises cannot continue, and that they decided to get out while they were at the top.

"The magazine that comes to mind is *12*," said Richard Britton, press buying director at media agency CIA Mediawork.

"It was a men's publishing phenomenon too. Its sales rose really steeply and really fast in the Eighties. And they've been dropping off ever since."

Leading article, page 13

NEW LADS

August 1997

£2.00

VOLEPTUOUS IN THE VALLEYS

Getting a bit more...

HOW TO PULL A FEMINIST

Bonking babes with balls

LOUNGE LIZARD!

BUTTOCKS FOR THE BEACH

Sand in your pants

12-page fashion special

Sex and drugs and boys' own adventure stories

The cover lines on the pastiche we have constructed above may look ridiculous, but they tell the tale of how the new generation of magazines appeal to young men.

How to pull a feminist: Many of these magazines use the same style as women's magazines to cover a subject. And the subject is usually sex. Sex in hotel rooms; sex when you're drunk; sex with your best friend's girlfriend. All firmly tongue-in-cheek.

Voluptuous in the valleys: There is always a report of a hunk's adventures, whether it is sampling the nightlife of Cardiff or swimming

with sharks. But their machismo is always undercut by humour.

Lounge lizard: All the magazines include spreads on clothes and gadgets. Whether they are really for readers or to encourage advertisers is debatable. *Loaded* and *FHM* are for men in the early 20s; their readers need to be told what is cool.

Buttocks for the beach: Health and fitness magazines are doing surprisingly well - most publishers thought the idea was too vain and American for British men. But the magazines are careful not set aspirations too high.

Girlie

August 1997
£2.00

Astro adultery

Promiscuous pisces and saucy scorpio

The tying game

The bondage craze sweeping the nation

101 things to do with mascara

or 102 if you put it on your eyelashes

Tweezer terror

Where have all the eyebrows gone?

Shock issue

Women do the ironing

Black

is the new white

Relationships, relationships... but are they enough?

Some of the cover lines on women's magazines are beyond satirising, but each one of ours above represents the tried and tested ingredients.

Astro Adultery: Combining sex with horoscopes is the apotheosis of the women's magazine. *Cosmo* led the way and magazines are always about relationships, relationships and relationships. Adultery features because of the vicarious thrill; astrology because their fatalist philosophy appeals to those without power in society.

Black is the new white: Fashion magazines

supposedly keep you abreast of trends. In fact they ensure the obsolescence of your wardrobe and encourage advertisers.

The tying game: Anecdotal stories of an anonymous love life - usually "Caroline, 23, who works in publishing..." - and first person confessionals help to add more relationship fodder to the mix while getting some fairly explicit sex into the magazine.

Tweezer terror: It is easy to criticise them for thriving on sensationalist health scares. But if women's magazines don't campaign for better breast cancer screening, no one will.

Thomas Cook Offers

15% OFF

NEXT YEAR'S FARAWAY HOLIDAYS

WITH THOMAS COOK HOLIDAYS

FLORIDA FROM £424	FROM £441
IN RO £466	MEXIC FROM £501

Thomas Cook is offering some great deals on next year's faraway holidays from Thomas Cook Holidays Tropical Shores and Florida Brochures. So hurry down to your local Thomas Cook shop or book by phone or see **Textatext** page 268.

AT LEAST 10% OFF ALL NEXT YEAR'S OVERSEAS SUMMER HOLIDAYS

Thomas Cook

The nice surprise is the prices

0990 777 555

OPEN 7 DAYS A WEEK

RIISING DAMP STAMP IT OUT

Wallguard
Like Air Conditioning for Walls

If your home is plagued by rising damp, you'll be only too aware of its effects. There's always a dank, musty smell, unsightly stains and mildew in the form of black fungus. And because the fungus spores are inhaled, it can be a health hazard especially to the young and old.

Rising damp can considerably reduce the value of your home. Condensation can have the same devastating effects.

Waterproof paints and wallpapers, and the application of a fungicide, can temporarily mask the problem.

But the damp is still there.

There is a fast, efficient way you can eliminate the problem. The Wallguard Ceramic Tube System. It's like air conditioning for walls.

It's environmentally friendly. It doesn't use potentially dangerous chemicals and in most circumstances there's no replastering or decorating involved. Walls of any thickness can be treated, solid or cavity, brick or stone.

The Wallguard System is in use throughout the UK - in thousands of domestic properties, in public buildings and in buildings of outstanding historical value. A prime example is Westminster Abbey, first installed in 1932 and recently added to by Wallguard. A strong testimony to their faith in our product.

So, if you're in despair over rising damp or condensation, relax, talk to us now on freephone

0800 508608

or post the coupon today - for a fast and efficient solution to your problem. No deposit finance details on request.

☐ My chemical injection has failed ☐ No existing damp proof course ☐ Conventional damp proof course has failed ☐ Condensation Control ☐ I would like to eliminate damp once and for all

Name

Tel

Address

Postcode

Send to: Wallguard, Freepost MR A787 Manchester M16 8HB

news

Serial A-graders get seven of the best

Alexandra Williams

Examining board denies school-leavers' ever-higher exam scores are a sign of falling standards

A new phenomenon emerged yesterday – the serial A-grader. Whereas in the past students were content with three, perhaps four, A-levels, this year pupils were notching up to seven grade As.

Also, pupils who could not utter a word of English two years ago will be walking off to Oxbridge next term with an abundance of A-levels at top grades. George Turnbull, spokesman for the Associated

Examining Board, the largest A-level board, said: "Seven A grades are very impressive. But this is not an indication of falling standards but improvement. In 1952 no one had climbed Mount Everest and at one stage the four-minute mile was a record but look at the situation now."

Philip Croker, of Weymouth, Dorset, achieved a grade A in statistics, pure maths, mechan-

ics, physics, chemistry, music and general studies. Not shy about his achievements, the pupil at Kingswood School, Bath, Somerset, said: "I know it is a good result, but I didn't have to work flat-out. I don't do anything by half-measures. I'll celebrate with some friends but I'm not going to get drunk because I don't like to drink very much." His grades guarantee his place at Oxford, to study maths.

Tracey Sowerby struck a blow for sixth-form colleges, achieving six As. A pupil at Queen Elizabeth Sixth Form College, Darlington, she excelled at German, maths, further maths, physics, history and general studies, ensuring a place at Oxford. She said: "When I looked at the bit of paper it was probably the best feeling I've ever had in my life. Now I have a reading-list of about 100 books

to get through before I start studying for history at Oxford."

A string of foreigners who could barely speak English a few years ago earned top university places. Natalia Slaska, 17, came to Britain five years ago from Norway. In 1995 she gained 10 GCSEs at A grade and yesterday celebrated her four A grades, which have ensured her a place to study modern languages at Cambridge.

Polish student Boguslaw Kysinski, 18, despite being unable to speak a word of English when he joined Clifton College, Bristol, two years ago, achieved five A grades. He has now won a place at Cambridge University and is celebrating with his friends in Warsaw.

And a Russian boy who gained five A grades lived up to his name. Oleg Lerner came to Britain in 1991. In October he

will take his place at Oxford to read biochemistry. "I guess you could say I'm a bit of a science buff," he admits. "All my friends seem to have done quite well too, but I don't know exactly what grades they got, as I was plucked out of the queue to receive mine, as they were so good." Some households had a double helping of celebrations. On Merseyside, twins Tom and Geoff Johnstone, pupils of Mer-

chant Taylor Boys School, in Crosby, each gained four A grades.

They shared their success with fellow student Michael Ledger-Lomas, of Freshfields, who was awarded the country's highest French mark by the Associated Examination Board. But he is to read history at Peterhouse College, Cambridge, after gaining A grades in five subjects. Twins David and Mark Johnson each scored three As – but will now be going to different universities.



Moment of truth: After a nervous few weeks thousands of students now know whether or not they have made the grade

Photograph: Nicola Kurtz

Emotional students lent a sympathetic ear

Esther Leach

The clearing helpline at Huddersfield University took 1,000 calls in less than two hours. The 12 telephone operators gave information and advice to often distressed students almost continuously. But by lunchtime there still had not been a single query about the new tuition fees.

"I don't think it is something stu-

dents are worried about," said Julie Pedley, Huddersfield University's Schools and Colleges Liaison Officer. "I find it a worry more for the parents than the students."

"We have been busier than ever this year and the students' qualifications seem to be higher. We are hearing of fewer N and U grades."

Mrs Pedley heads up the helpline operation with 10 women and two men, answering

calls over the next two weeks. They are part of the university staff chosen for their sympathetic and helpful manner.

"Don't despair," one operator told a caller. "I know it is a traumatic time. I'll put you through to the tutor and he may still be able to help you." As soon as the phone is replaced, it rang again.

The pleas for help and guidance are repeated throughout the

morning. The operators divert calls to take short breaks. "It gets to us all in the end," said one operator. "I've taken a few calls from parents and teachers who are calling in because the students have been too upset to speak."

"I was talking to one mother and I could hear her daughter sobbing in the background."

Yet another operator replaced the phone and said: "That was

nice. He got all his points and is ringing to confirm his place on the law course. That's a nice feeling. I've had only two tearful ones so far."

"I've answered calls each year for three years now and it is a very traumatic time."

"Even students who have done well get very excited and don't always make themselves clear. It's a time of great turmoil for them."

"I feel I'm helping people get what they want and we try to ensure they are being as realistic as possible especially if they don't get the grades they need."

"We sympathise with them when the only alternative is to re-sit their exams."

Huddersfield University has a total student body of 15,000, about a third of whom are part time.

The best performing schools

The Independent's A-level table features only state comprehensive schools. To ensure fair comparison, we do not include independent schools or those that select by ability.

The rankings in the table are based on the average points scored by candidates taking two or more A-levels, and do not include general studies. An A grade earns ten points, a B grade eight points, a C grade six points and so on.

We contacted most of the 200 top state schools according to the Government's 1996 A-level league tables. Our table offers a guide to the best performing schools, but should not be viewed as definitive.

Chase High School, Malvern	22.1
The Catholic High School, Chester	21.2
Redbourne Upper School, Bedfordshire	21.1
Caereinion High, Powys	20.6
Northallerton College, Northallerton	20.2
Richmond School, North Yorks	19.9
The Castle School, Thornbury	19.9
Durham Johnston, Durham	19.7
Anglo-European School, Essex	19.6
London Oratory	19.6
Lady Lumley's School, Pickering	19.0
Lady Manners, Derbyshire	19.0
St Mary's RC High School, Derbyshire	18.8
King Edward VI School, Lichfield	18.8
Huntington School, York	18.8
Turton High, Bolton	18.7
Fallibroome High School	18.6
Alsager School, Cheshire	18.5
Tarporley County High School, Cheshire	18.4
St Nicholas RC High School, Northwich	18.3
Saffron Walden County High, Essex	18.1
Stokesley School, Stokesley	18.1
Upton-by-Chester County High, Chester	17.8
Guiseley School, Leeds	17.7
Old Swinford Hospital, Dudley	17.7
Wymondham High School, Norfolk	17.7
Ilkley Grammar School, Yorkshire	17.6
Lanidloes High, Powys	17.6
John Port School, Derbyshire	17.5
Sandbach High, Cheshire	17.5
Trinity School, Nottingham	17.5
Wilmslow High, Cheshire	17.5
All Hallows Catholic High, Cheshire	17.4
St Aidan's and St John Fisher	
Associate Sixth Form, Harrogate	17.3
Tapton School, Sheffield	17.2
Holmes Chapel, Cheshire	16.4
The Becket School, Nottinghamshire	16.4
Allerton High School, Leeds	16.3
Churchill Community School, Bristol	16.3
The Minster School, Nottinghamshire	16.3
Ysgol Y Presell, Pembrokeshire	16.2
Droitwich High, Hereford and Worcester	15.9
Pershore High, Hereford and Worcester	15.9
Rivington and Blackrod School, Bolton	15.9
Parrs Wood School, Manchester	15.8
The Lakes School, Windermere	15.7
Notre Dame School, Sheffield	15.7
Wolfraton School, Hull	15.5
Ormskirk Grammar, Ormskirk	15.2
Prince Henry's High, Evesham	15.2

Did Eve make footprints in the sand 117,000 years ago?

Washington (Reuters) — A set of 117,000-year-old footprints found in South Africa is possible evidence of a woman who could be the common ancestor of all modern humans, the fossils' discoverers said yesterday.

Made by bare feet in wet sand after a rainstorm, the prints are an important clue to a period with a scarce fossil record: 100,000 to 300,000 years ago, when modern humans emerged.

"These were made by a person who looked anatomically just like us," said Lee Berger, a

palaeoanthropologist who announced the discovery at a news conference at the National Geographic Society in Washington, where a fibreglass cast of the footprints was displayed.

Mr Berger and David Roberts, a South African geologist who found the fossils nearly two years ago, referred to the person who made the prints as "she", based on the small size of the feet, but acknowledged that it could have been a small man or a child.

If the prints were made by a

female, she could be the anthropological "Eve", a hypothetical woman who lived in Africa between 100,000 and 300,000 years ago and carried a type of DNA that is passed on only through females.

Eve is thought to be the common ancestor of modern human, and while Mr Berger said it was highly questionable that the prints were hers, he also said they were made at the right time and place to fit her profile.

Mr Roberts, of the South African Council for Geoscience, found the footprints in the rocky shore of the Langebaan Lagoon, 60 miles (97km) north of Cape Town. The chances of them surviving to this day were "millions to one", he said. To last this long, the footprints had to be quickly covered after being made, possibly by blowing sand, then buried for a long time to be preserved in rock, then eroded to the point where hardened sediment from the ancient dunes could be chipped away to reveal them again.

What he first saw was a ridge

in the rock along the lagoon that showed where the ancient sand had been pushed aside by the side of the woman's foot; the actual footprint was filled with sand.

Mr Roberts was looking for footprints in the area because he had already found fossilized tracks of carnivores and rock fragments that had been worked on by hominids.

Only three other sets of hominid footprints have been found in Africa, and two of these came from more than a million years ago, too early for modern humans. The third set were dated about 30,000 years ago, a blink in the course of human evolution, Mr Berger said.

The Langebaan footprints were dated by studying the surrounding sediments and noting the fluctuations in sea level in the area over time, Mr Roberts said. The line of footprints stretches away from the shore into what used to be ancient sand dunes which are now buried under rock. Mr Berger said scientists plan to uncover those additional footprints.



Sands of time: The 8-in footprint fossils found on the rocky shore of Langebaan Lagoon. Photograph: Kenneth Garrett

Bid to move TV 9pm watershed

Paul McCann
Media Correspondent

ITV is battling to stop television's regulator "sanitising" television by moving the 9pm watershed to 10pm.

The Independent Television Commission (ITC) has issued a proposed programming code which insists that all programmes which start at 9pm and run until 10pm be "suitable for family viewing".

ITV is particularly worried about the plan because the *ITV News at Ten* would mean it could not start running adult programmes until 10.30.

The ITC regulates programmes on ITV, Channel 4 and cable and satellite. The watershed prevents nudity, sex or violence being shown before 9pm.

ITV is also angry because the watershed on cable and satellite channels is already lower at 8pm.

The draft plan also proposes that no one should be portrayed smoking in programmes unless there is "strong editorial justification for inclusion".

Taken literally that would

mean we couldn't show *Casablanca* before 9pm because Humphrey Bogart smokes, for example," said an ITV spokeswoman.

A new clause would also ban the depiction of drug-taking as "problem free and glamorous".

An ITV source told the industry magazine *Broadcast*: "The ITC has gone too far. It has a sanitised view of life. They are Americanising television."

The ITC defended the proposals and said yesterday they were intended to generate discussion. "We are not saying there will never be films or dramas starting before 9pm which resolve with a certain amount of violence just before 10pm, only that it should not become a regular thing," said a spokeswoman.

However, ITV is drawing up a strongly worded response opposing the plan.

The ITC has issued warnings to broadcasters in the past for starting programmes on the 9pm watershed with adult scenes. *Cracker* was once censured for opening with a rape scene.

Cheap mortgages.

- It's easy to transfer.
- Our mortgage rate is 7.32% (7.5% APR variable).
- Call us now for more details.

0181 649 9099 0161 831 9099 0141 221 9099
LONDON MANCHESTER GLASGOW

CALL ANYTIME 8am to 8pm Monday to Friday and 9am to 5pm Saturday. Please quote ref. IND137

www.directline.co.uk A Royal Bank of Scotland company.

Subject to status. Life insurance to cover the loan and security required. Rates correct at 1997. Subject to variation. Written quotations on request. YOUR HOME IS AT RISK IF YOU DO NOT KEEP UP REPAYMENTS ON A MORTGAGE OR OTHER LOAN SECURED ON IT. Calls may be recorded for your credit rating. Direct Line and the red phone are trademarks of Direct Line Insurance plc, used with its permission.

We make music easier to track down.

(centre spread, tabloid section.)

ON WEDNESDAY IT WAS THEM.

Draw date: 13/8/97. The winning numbers: 5, 10, 17, 29, 41, 43. Bonus number: 48.
Total Sales: £27,281,835. Prize Fund: £13,742,202 (45% of ticket sales plus £1,465,377 Superdraw funding).

CATEGORY	NO OF WINNERS	AMOUNT FOR EACH WINNER	TOTAL EACH TIER
Match 3 (Jackpot)	3	£1,858,867	£5,000,000
Match 5 plus bonus ball	22	£49,435	£1,087,570
Match 5	742	£813	£609,872
Match 4	34,087	£43	£1,485,741
Match 3	647,947	£10	£6,479,470
TOTALS	582,811		£13,712,454

© Camelot Group plc. Players must be 16 or over.

Breakage (prizes rounded down to nearest £1): £20,748.

IT COULD BE YOU. THE NATIONAL LOTTERY

In the event of any discrepancy in the above, the data contained in Camelot central computer system shall prevail.

كلنا من الواصل

Ministers study cut in free dentistry on NHS

Colin Brown and Ian Burrell

Most people's free dental treatment on the NHS could be limited to check-ups under radical plans being studied by ministers. The idea is to release funds to reverse a decline which has left nearly half of the country without an NHS dentist.

Ministers are considering reducing the number of dental treatments to those who aren't children, poor or elderly. Dentists might then be paid more to do the routine work. This, it is argued, would tempt them back into the NHS, so restoring national cover.

The plan goes beyond the restoration of free dental checks and eye check-ups for pensioners, reported yesterday.

Many patients have no choice of an NHS dentist in their area, and ministers are studying the idea of reversing the exodus from the NHS by dentists by focusing the money on areas where there is a shortage.

Expensive treatment on the NHS, such as bridge work at £600, would no longer be available. Ministers have been urged by dentists' leaders to go further by focusing on care and treat-

ment of children, the poor, and the restoration of a basic service, free of charge, for registration, diagnosis, advice and prevention for all adults. Funding for health authorities to tackle local NHS dentistry shortages was also supported.

The British Dental Association said it favoured "targeting" for children and those on low income, and all other adults should pay full charges for everything apart from a simple diagnostic service (i.e. check-ups).

The options are part of a fundamental review of health spending, and decisions have yet to be reached but "targeting" is on the agenda. Alan Milburn, the health minister, told MPs before the recess he would be undertaking with Tessa Jowell, the public health minister, "an important joint initiative to ensure that access to NHS dentistry is more widely available and that our resources better improve the oral health of the population".

He has told officials that the former Tory government's efforts to reverse the exodus of dentists from the NHS through "access" funds have not worked. The pressure for action was in-

tensified by figures passed to *The Independent* showing millions of people have been struck off official registers after failing to turn up at surgeries because, it is feared, the cost of dental care has driven large sections of the

population away from dentists. Currently, dental patients have to pay around £4 for an initial consultancy, whereas it costs nothing for a basic appointment with a doctor. Dental patients have to pay

approximately 80 per cent of the cost of any subsequent treatment they receive up to the value of £330.

When the Conservatives came to power in 1979, dental patients were only obliged to

pay for treatment which cost up to £5 and check-ups were free. The NHS has already reduced the scope of NHS cover from natural-looking porcelain crowns costing at least £150 each. NHS patients have to

settle for metal crowns.

Under legislation introduced by the former Tory government, people who fail to visit their dentist within a 15-month period are automatically deleted from the register.

Open wide: Many people brave the dentist's chair but in some parts of the country two-thirds of the population do not go. Photograph: Geraint Lewis



Figures obtained by Harry Barnes, the Labour MP, show that 4.1 million people lapsed from the register last year.

Although others will have re-registered, the proportion of the population using a dentist is in steady free fall and only 21 million adults, 52 per cent of the population, are now registered.

The age group which is most readily abandoning dental care is the 25 to 34-year-old bracket, among whom there has been a 16 per cent fall in dental registrations in the past three years.

More alarmingly, figures produced by the Government's Dental Practice Board show that in some parts of the country, more than two thirds of children do not visit the dentist.

There are also areas where two thirds of the adult population do not see a dentist. The only section of the population among which dental registration is not declining is the over-75 age group, which normally does not pay for treatment.

Birmingham Group wins Eurovision Song Contest

Paedophile to be tagged

Patricia Wynn Davies
Legal Affairs Editor

In the first case of its kind, a convicted paedophile has volunteered to be electronically tagged after telling police he would attack another child.

The case is doubly unusual because child-rapist Graham Seddon, 43, is not serving a sentence, or on bail or licence and so is no longer subject to criminal justice agencies.

Seddon served six years of a nine-year sentence for the rape and sexual assault of a nine-year-old girl in Manchester in 1990. He was arrested earlier this year in the Merseyside area with a bag containing sweets and a colouring book.

Initially he was sent to a psychiatric clinic in Huyton, Merseyside, but the authorities had no power to detain him because his condition is deemed untreatable. He can likewise opt to discontinue the monitoring at any time because he is no longer under sentence.

Seddon, from Rochdale,

Greater Manchester, is already under continuous voluntary watch in a hostel, and escorted whenever he leaves the building. The electronic tag will monitor his presence at or absence from the hostel.

The move was welcomed by the People's Power group of Huyton parents angered by Seddon's release from the clinic into the community.

But there were also doubts about the experiment. Harry Fletcher, assistant general secretary of the National Association of Probation Officers, said: "The case sets a worrying precedent because it involves someone accepting a punishment without due process. It is also difficult to see how this is going to significantly improve the protection of children beyond what is already in place."

George Barrow, for the Association of Chief Officers of Probation, said that it was the right action in the circumstances but the case highlighted the need for statutory extended supervision.

If we don't
reach you
within **an hour**, we'll
give you **£10**.

The AA and RAC won't.

WHEN YOUR CAR LETS YOU DOWN,
Green Flag won't. On average, we rescue
our members in just 35 minutes.* And if
we're not with you in less than one hour,
you can claim £10 back.

call free today on
0800 001 353

quote ref. no. 807107 and your credit/debit card number

Green Flag
Monitoring Assistance

WE LEAVE EVERYONE STANDING BUT YOU.

<http://www.greenflag.co.uk>

*Upon receipt of claim £10 cheque will be issued.
*Excludes from customer satisfaction questionnaire

With over 20 years experience and a reputation for delivering a consistent, professional service, it's hardly surprising that the NEC has become one of the World's busiest venues and a major international destination.

Experience the difference.

news

The Naes try to swing it

In Scotland: Borders fret on devolution

Stephen Goodwin

When the Scottish referendum results start flashing up on the electronic scoreboard at Edinburgh's International Conference Centre in the early hours of 12 September, some rule campaigners will be keeping an anxious look-out for the vote in the Borders.

The robustly independent-minded folk who inhabit the historic market towns and rolling countryside drained by the River Tweed are the most devolution sceptic of all Scots. As one so-called "Souter o' Selkirk" put it to *The Independent*, an Edinburgh parliament would be just another 129 politicians "blethering a lot o' bloody hash".

The Borderer's first loyalty is to his or her burgh – witness the passions of Borders rugby and the ancient custom of Common Ridings, a ceremonial inspection of the burgh boundaries. After that, loyalty is to the region itself, often with closer ties to neighbours in Northumberland than in the central belt. As to business, right back to the cattle-thieving "reivers" it was always a cross-border affair.

In the 1979 referendum the Borders had the highest "No" vote in Scotland – 59.7 per cent (30,780). In Scotland as a whole, 51.6 per cent voted "Yes", though the simple majority was insufficient to meet the required threshold.

The Borderers were afraid a parliament would be dominated by the monolithic municipal socialists of the central belt. Much is being made by ministers and pro-devolution parties of the theory that the switch to proportional representation should prevent one-party rule. But ask the people of Selkirk or Hawick if they are reassured and they look at you quizzically and say – "Aye, I'm not sure about that." It is the unconvincing equivalent of "I hear what you say".

Opinion polls show the Borders likely to vote "Yes" by a modest majority, but John Smail, editor of the *Southern Reporter*, thinks interest is low

and the outcome still "too close to call". The threatened ban on fox hunting has generated far more letters to his paper than devolution.

The two parliamentary constituencies of the Scottish Borders Council return Liberal Democrat MPs, though more out of an anti-establishment tradition than an abiding belief in Paddy Ashdown's policies. And until recently nearly all Borders councillors sat as Independents.

Michael Moore, who has succeeded David (now Lord) Steel as MP for Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale, plans a campaign of general election-style intensity in the fortnight before the poll to try and mobilise the party's supporters but he admits there is "politics fatigue" even among local activists.

Mr Moore too would not have supported devolution in 1979 because of the risk of domination by the central belt. Another negative factor that weighed heavily at the time was the intervention on the "No" side of the most influential Border laird, the former Conservative Prime Minister Lord Home.

Even so, on the street in Selkirk opinion seemed to confirm Mr Moore's view that there is still all to play for. Among those who expressed support it was usually an "on balance" or "I think it's going to happen this time" sort of thing rather than gushing enthusiasm.

Opponents were more forthright. John Nairn, whose butcher's shop boasts "Award Winning Haggis", said the parliament would be expensive and powerless. "The present arrangement has worked for 300 or 400 years. Why change it?"

Gordon Stirrat, sales manager at McNabs saddlery, blamed a "vociferous minority" for leading Scotland into something that the majority, and particularly business, did not want. "I wear the kilt, I support the Scottish rugby team, and I'm as nationalistic as anybody but we don't need an expensive talking shop."



Pembrokeshire, traditionally devo-sceptic, must vote 'Yes' for an Assembly to become reality Photograph: Rob Stratton

In Wales: Little England holds the key

Tony Heath

Although the handle "Little England beyond Wales" still lives on in Pembrokeshire, opposition to devolution may just be on the wane. Even long-standing opponents detect faint signs of change.

For the dream of a Welsh Assembly to become reality, the people of Pembrokeshire will have to turn out in numbers on 18 September and vote "Yes" in the referendum.

In 1979, the rejection by the people of Pembrokeshire was decisive when Wales opposed devolution by 4 to 1. The explanation for that decision lies partly in geography. Pembrokeshire is to Wales as Cornwall is to England: a peninsula which is physically and psychologically semi-detached and somewhat independent-minded.

Ian Bell, chairman of the Pembrokeshire Hotels and Restaurants Association is no lover of the Government's proposals. However, he concedes that views have changed since 1979's four-to-one defeat of devolution proposals: "I reckon today it's 60-40 against an assembly."

His hotel stands on a bluff overlooking Saundersfoot, a tidy resort which received a share of the 70,000 tons of oil which spewed from the stricken *Sea Empress* at Milford Haven 18 months ago.

Today the beaches have recovered from the disaster which pushed Pembrokeshire into the news and up the political agenda.

Michael Williams, who represents Tenby, the area's premier resort on Pembrokeshire County Council, believes that bodies like the Milford Haven Port Authority which faces prosecution by the Environment Agency over the accident, could be reined in by an elected body.

"Wales has become a quango-state and there's a growing desire for non-elected bodies being made more accountable."

Nick Ainger, MP for Pembrokeshire South and Car-

marthen West, senses the devolution tide rising. "A lot has changed in 18 years. The election campaign down here revealed that many who voted 'No' in 1979, are on the move."

"The Callaghan government was exhausted in 1979 after five years in office," Jackie Lawrence, MP for Prescili Pembroke points out. "Today there is an air of confidence following Labour's victory on 1 May."

She said that there must be a change in the current situation which sees Wales' 1,275 elected councillors being outnumbered by 1,400 quango appointees who are responsible for nearly a third of the annual £76m Welsh Office budget.

There is still a lot to play for in a county where, thanks to a heavily fretted coastline and tidal rivers, salt water is never more than 10 miles away.

Pembrokeshire County Council is holding fire until next month when it will meet to decide its stance. But earlier this week, acting in a personal capacity, council chair, Peter Stock, launched the Pembrokeshire "No" campaign.

At the launch, two thousand balloons were released over Haverfordwest, each one representing the cost of 10 hip replacements which the anti-devolutionists claim could be paid for with the £117m they say the assembly will cost over a four-year period. Mr Stock said: "We fought hard and successfully for the return of our unitary authority only to be faced now with a proposal for an additional tier of government."

That is a point of view strenuously opposed by his colleague, Thomas Tudor who chairs the county's "Yes" campaign.

The Prime Minister, who concentrated on the industrial south when he visited Wales last month, is expected to cross the Severn Bridge again before 18 September. His Englishness could give the "Yes" campaign a boost in "Little England beyond Wales".

Blair offers No 10 as home for Scottish art

David Lister
Arts News Editor

The Prime Minister Tony Blair wants to hang Scottish paintings and portraits of Scottish heroes on the walls of Downing Street as a reminder of his Edinburgh school days.

Mr Blair, who attended the city's Fettes School, is particularly keen that a portrait of his own hero Sir Walter Scott, the author of *Ivanhoe*, is given pride of place at No 10, and that there is a greater representation of Scottish art.

The director of the National Galleries of Scotland, Timothy Clifford, has had private talks with Mr Blair about Scottish art, and increasing the Downing Street collection. He will have to consult his trustees on whether paintings can be taken from the walls of the Edinburgh galleries or from the mass of Scottish paintings currently in storage.

The Prime Minister has told Mr Clifford that he wants a portrait of Scott. But he stipulated that he did not want a portrait of the poet Robbie Burns. He did not give any reason for excluding Burns from his wish list, but as an avid nationalist with an insatiable taste for drink and women, he is not natural new Labour material.

Mr Clifford is in overall charge of the National Gallery, Portrait Gallery and

Modern Art Museum. An exhibition of the 18th-century portrait painter Henry Raeburn is packing in crowds at the Edinburgh Festival but there is likely to be opposition from National Gallery trustees to a Raeburn leaving the public collections to go south.

Mr Blair's interest in Scottish culture is exciting reciprocal interest in the Scottish capital. At the Royal Museum, Sheila Brock, campaign officer, said yesterday she would be happy to supply objects from Scottish history for 10 Downing Street and would be talking to Mr Blair.

Mr Clifford said that to have a prime minister, chancellor and foreign secretary with an interest in Scottish culture was unique in his experience.

Mr Clifford is himself promoting plans for a gallery devoted to Scottish art in Glasgow. The £31m project could open within five years and contain a thousand paintings by Scottish artists.

At present the National Gallery in Edinburgh has only seven Scottish paintings on display in its permanent collection. "It's tokenism really," said Mr Clifford.

"We have seven-eighths of our collection in store and one has to show the Titians and Cézannes, and the Scottish artists lose out. There is a massive need for a gallery devoted to Scottish art."



Grant's portrait of Sir Walter Scott could end up in No 10 Courtesy: Bridgeman

Colourists please, but not kilts or claymores

The news that Tony Blair wants Scottish art for the walls of Downing Street is cheering. It may help fan interest in one of Europe's lesser known traditions. It is not, however, as unexpected as it may seem. One of the Prime Minister's closest friends, Derry Irvine, the Lord Chancellor, is a keen collector of Scottish painting, while another Cabinet minister, Donald Dewar, is hugely knowledgeable on the subject.

It would be a pity, however, if all that happened was the despatch to London of a few varnished yards of uneasy-looking men in fake Highland gear, courtesy of one of the Victorians. There are much more interesting things to borrow.

If Mr Dewar or Lord Irvine are consulted, Blair will end up with a few Scottish colourists – those fluid post-impressionists whose dazzling landscapes brought full colour to Scotland in the Twenties and Thirties. He will have seen some on Lord Irvine's walls. He should ask for a Peppoe, a Cadell or a Leslie Hunter, whose best work is much better than most of the stuff in No 10.

An alternative is to go for one of the earlier giants of Scottish art, such as Allan Ramsay or Raeburn. Both are very fine, and deserve to hang alongside Gainsborough or Reynolds. But they are

hardly in tune with Blair's promise of a "young country".

So should he, perhaps, come bang up to date and go for the young figurative painters from Glasgow, or the sculptors? The trouble there is that they are... well, not quite suitable. Peter Howson is best known for his paintings of fat, tattooed and sweating maniacs being pulled along by pit-bull terriers. They are undeniably vivid accounts of contemporary life – but not, perhaps, quite the image Blair wants to convey. As for Ken Currie, the best of the lot, he is (let us lower our voices) a militant socialist. He paints sadists, secret policemen, and tormented-looking souls. There are heroes in his work, but they look worrying like Communists. Again, not quite the thing for a champagne reception.

Then there are people such as Andy Goldsworthy, the sculptor who now lives in south-west Scotland. The trouble is he works in ice, mud, leaves, sticks and stones. A lot of puddles, one fears, on the nice Persian carpets.

So it's a tricky job, perhaps, that the galleries in Scotland now have. Who shall they send to the court of King Tony? There should be only one rule: no kilts, stags or claymores.

Andrew Marr

Defence orders overshoot as war is declared on waste

Christopher Bellamy
Defence Correspondent

The cost of all but one of Britain's 25 highest defence projects went up last year and only five of them are expected to be on time, according to a report issued yesterday.

The National Audit Office report says that the average delay on major projects, worth £53bn in total, has increased from 35 to 40 months; the Challenger 2 tank project slipped by a further two years and is now three years late, although not significantly over price. The EH 101 Merlin helicopter project is expected to cost £650m more than originally envisaged – "in part due to crashes of prototype aircraft" – and is expected in service five years late. Just two weeks ago George Robertson, the Secretary of

State for Defence, committed himself to the elimination of waste as part of the Strategic Defence Review. He focused on the procurement of defence equipment which takes about £9bn a year out of the £23bn-a-year defence budget.

In evidence to the House of Commons Select Committee on Defence, Mr Robertson announced a drive for "smart procurement", using new contractual procedures to get the best value for money and making more use of commercial

products. In some cases, the NAO found new methods had already worked – especially the "no acceptable price, no contract" arrangement which had knocked £160m off the price of the Navy's two new commando assault ships from £589 m to £429m.

However, most of the report's findings are a sharp reminder to the MoD to get its act together. The NAO, headed by Sir Alan Bourn, the Comptroller and Auditor General, notes that although the ministry filled in the sheets it was given correctly, its

information on running costs for older equipment was "weak or incomplete in three out of five cases where a slippage of two or more years had occurred. This could adversely affect their ability to judge budgetary priorities accurately."

The only major project where estimated costs decreased is also the biggest – Trident nuclear submarines, where a reduction of £3.4bn is forecast. This helped absorb a net forecast increase on the other 24 projects, giving a drop of £694m

(2 per cent) overall. Another big project, the Eurofighter 2000 aircraft, shows a net increase of £1.3bn, and the remaining 23 projects about the same.

The MoD said a quarter of the slippages were deliberate, in order to balance their books by delaying expenditure, and not because of delay on the part of manufacturers, which the audit office recognised.

The report also accepted that the MoD had agreed a recovery plan with Vickers, the tank builders, to try to get the project back on schedule. With international projects – the four-nation Eurofighter and the Cobra radar system – the problems of dealing with other countries (Germany, in both cases) delayed the expected in-service date.

NAO, Major Projects Report 1996 HC 238, 15 August 1997

Over budget and overdue: Eurofighter, Merlin helicopter and Tornado

Worst five cost overruns.



Eurofighter 2000 multi-role aircraft (pictured left). Built by British Aerospace in collaboration with German, Italian and Spanish firms. Total cost of 232, £15bn. Estimated cost increase: £1,360m. Estimated in service: 40 months late.

EH 101 Merlin helicopter (pictured right; Photograph: APL) (Navy) and support helicopter (Army/Marines). GKN/Westland. Total cost of 66 helicopters: £5bn. Estimated cost increase: £650m, estimated in service: 64 months late.

Spearfish heavyweight torpedo. GEC-Marconi. Total cost – number classified – £1.7bn. Estimated cost increase: £200m. Estimated in service: 80 months late.

Tornado GR1 mid-life update modifications. British Aerospace. Total cost of 142 aircraft: £934m. Estimated cost increase £400m. Estimated in service: 64 months late.

Extra Sea Harriers (to replace lost aircraft). British Aerospace. Total cost of 23, £293m. Estimated cost increase: £100m. Estimated in service: on time.



صكزا من الاصل

BBC
You make it what it is.

In the last year, BBC programmes and services have helped over 40 million people with their education. From children and teachers in over 90% of the country's schools, to our older (and subsequently wiser) viewers.

For instance, the BBC has created two new campaigns especially for adults. 'Computers Don't Bite', a computer literacy programme and 'Count Me In', a service for people with numeracy difficulties which attracted 200,000 calls for help. (51 year old Mr. Gibbins's, below,

being one of them.) 'The Learning Zone' meanwhile, is designed for viewers who want to record programmes during the night, then watch them at a convenient time.

It's thanks to you, the British public, and the unique way you fund it, that the BBC can continue to invest in such a diverse range of programmes and services.

You can find out more about how your money is being spent in the BBC Annual Report available at bookshops and libraries. See, we even encourage you to do your homework.



**BBC education programmes now reach more people after school.
IN ONE CASE, 35 YEARS AFTER SCHOOL.**

international

Berliners get hump with race stunt

Berlin (Reuters) - A caravan of 11 camels from Abu Dhabi topped through Berlin's Brandenburg Gate yesterday. In a publicity stunt to promote Europe's first camel races on Sunday, Germans and Arabs wearing white robes and traditional head-dresses led the beasts through the gate, which is symbolic of German unification. Some 30,000 people are expected to attend the six races, organised under the patronage of the President of the United Arab Emirates, Zayed bin Sultan al Nahyan, and the German camel-racing club, Fatamorgana. The event is aimed at improving ties between the countries, though some German animal-lovers have urged a boycott of the races, saying camels are not suited to northern European terrain or climate. "Camels may be a little strange for Berlin," the Emirates Interior Minister, Khalaf Khamis, said. "But sport is an important part of our culture and I hope we can use it to build a bridge for greater co-operation."



Beasty business: Camels at the Brandenburg Gate publicising planned races, which have been attacked by animal-lovers. Photograph: Reuters

Indonesia rocked by currency collapse

Richard Lloyd Parry

Indonesia yesterday succumbed to the attacks of speculators and allowed its currency, the rupiah, to devalue on the foreign exchange markets, the third such victim of the financial turmoil which has shaken South-East Asian economies in the last six weeks.

The dollar rose by 130 rupiah on the previous day to close at an all-time high of 2,780 rupiah yesterday, after the Indonesian central bank abandoned attempts to defend the value of its currency. "Theoretically, it's a free float," said Sudradjat Djiwandono, the bank's governor.

"You can also call it a managed float without a band."

The situation is similar to the sterling crisis which forced Britain to drop out of the European exchange rate mechanism (ERM) in 1992. The rupiah has hitherto traded in a narrow band, announced in advance by the central bank in order to promote stability in the financial markets.

On Wednesday, Bank Indonesia is believed to have sold between \$200m (£126m) and \$500m in an attempt to beat off the depredations of currency speculators who were trading on the hunch that the rupiah's stated level is not supported by the fundamental strength of the country's economy. Yesterday, like Britain in 1992, the bank concluded that the price of de-

fending its currency exceeded the cost of letting it to slide.

Last month the Thai baht and the Filipino peso were both devalued in a regional crisis which has drastically undermined confidence in the vaunted "tiger economies" of South-East Asia. At a regional meeting in Malaysia last month, ministers angrily blamed the currency turmoil on the billionaire speculator George Soros, whose Quantum Fund also played a key role in the ERM sterling crisis.

Mr Soros supports a charitable foundation campaigning for democracy in Burma, and the Malaysian prime minister, Mahathir Mohamad, accused him of deliberately undermining the region's governments because of the Burmese junta's admission to the Association of South-East Asian Nations.

But to most economists, the activities of Mr Soros and others look more like a natural response to weak economic fundamentals. Thailand, long a buoyant economy, has been suffering from sluggish growth, a swelling trade deficit and negative equity; at a meeting in Tokyo this week, Asian governments and the International Monetary Fund came up with \$16bn to bail the country out. Indonesia's economy has been relatively healthy, but the recent devaluation and the increase in the cost of the dollar will increase the repayment costs of Indonesia's \$55.5bn of foreign debts.

10 Italians held by Yemen tribes

Rome (Reuters) - Ten Italians, including a nine-year-old boy, have been abducted in two incidents in Yemen, the Italian Foreign Ministry said.

A ministry official said a first group of six people was kidnapped in the south of the country on Wednesday while on their way to Al Mukalla on the Gulf of Aden coast. They had been taken to the interior of Yemen. "We have spoken to one of them and they are well, they are being treated well," the official said.

The group consisted of one family with a nine-year-old son and another with a daughter whose age was not yet known. Earlier reports from the capital Sanaa had said five or six European tourists, either Germans or Italians, had also been kidnapped by tribesmen while on a tour in the Abyan governorate and taken to Shabwa in central Yemen.

The ministry official in Rome said four more Italians were kidnapped near Khamir, some 60 miles north of Sanaa, yesterday morning, but he had no further details.

The incident was the third in-

volving Italians in recent weeks in Yemen, one of the Arab world's poorest countries.

An Italian kidnapped by tribesmen earlier in August was released last Sunday after five days. Two others were abducted in late July and freed after one day.

In March, four German holidaymakers were kidnapped. Earlier that month, seven Germans touring the country on motorcycles were also abducted.

Kidnapping is a common tactic by Yemeni tribes holding grievances against the government or foreign oil firms operating in Yemen. Tribesmen have attempted to use French and US diplomats and on one occasion the Saudi ambassador - as bargaining chips in land and water disputes.

All hostages have been released unharmed so far. Giorgio Bonanomi, the 49-year-old Italian who was released last Sunday, said he was never afraid and had been treated throughout very well, adding that it was an enjoyable cultural experience.

significant shorts

Timothy McVeigh refuses to plead for his life

Timothy McVeigh was formally sentenced to death for the Oklahoma City bombing after he quoted a former Supreme Court judge who said government "teaches the people by its example." McVeigh said he was quoting from a dissenting opinion by Louis Brandeis in a 1928 wiretapping case. "Our government is the hope, the omnipotent teacher. For good or for ill, it teaches the people by its example. That's all I have, Your Honour." Except for the reference to government setting a bad example by killing someone, he did not plead for his life.

AP - Denver

Freedom, 52 years too late

Nine Indonesian tribesmen have come down from a mountain in Sulawesi and said they believed the Dutch still ruled the country. On Sunday Indonesia celebrates its 52nd anniversary of independence. Reuters - Jakarta

Vietnam parties on

Vietnam's Communist Party said membership was booming and reported figures showing 47,000 people had joined during the first half of this year. Reuters - Hanoi

Franks for the memory

Sausage enthusiasts can make a pilgrimage to the home village of Johann Georg Lahner, the butcher who cooked up the worst early last century. Gasseltdorf, Bavaria, has marked his 225th birthday with a plaque recounting the history of the hotdog. AP - Frankfurt

Low, low prices on the things you need NOW

"You can brighten up your garden and protect your wood with this woodstain."

KEY season PRICE

Cuprinol 5 Year High Performance Woodstain Available in 5 Colours. 2.5 litres. **£18.49** each (Was \$21.49) **SAVE £3**

Also available 750ml. Was \$8.99 **£6.99** each

Carolina 42ins Ceiling Fan Wood grain effect blades with cane inset. Max 3 x 60 watt bulbs (Not included). Was \$34.90 **£29.99** **SAVE OVER £4**

Soccer 30ins Ceiling Fan With football globe light kit available in red/white, blue/white and black/white. Maximum 60 watt bulb (Not included). Was \$29.99 **£24.99** **SAVE £5**

9ins Oscillating Desk Fan D97 2 speed. Was \$12.79 **£11.49**

Home Surveillance TV Camera Includes camera, connection system with built-in microphone, connecting directly to your TV or video, 20m cable, power supply adaptor and battery. **£99.99**

Black & Decker Angle Grinder K965 650 watts, 11,000rpm, 115mm disk size and adjustable safety guard. **£39.99**

Sandtex Textured or Smooth Masonry Paint Pure Brilliant White. Guaranteed for 15 years. 5 litres. **£10.99** each

Dulux Weathershield Textured or Smooth Masonry Paint Pure Brilliant White. Guaranteed for 10 years. 5 litres. **£10.99** each

Ransol 5 Year Woodstain Available in various colours. Gloss or satin finish. 2.5 litre. **£18.49** each (Was \$21.49) **£6.99** each

Also available 750ml. **£6.99** each

Dado Rail White primed MDF 18mm x 44mm x 2.4m. **£2.99** each

Also available in pack of 4. (Not shown). **£9.99** pack of 4

Whirlpool Fan Pack Includes fan oven B80 801, standard hood BCH 830 and gas hob B8H 823. Available in white or brown. Was \$299.97 **£259** per pack

Two Tread Step Stool Lightweight with non-slip plastic feet to protect floors. **£7.99**

Galinsborough Energy 2000W Electric Shower 9.5kW. Was \$99 **£88.99**

Also Available Galinsborough Style 400X Electric Shower 9.5kW. (Not shown). **£78.99**

Valencia Wallcoverings by Vynara Available in various designs and colourways. 10m. **£5.49** per roll **£3.99** per roll

Co-ordinating Borders 5m **£3.99** per roll

Jeff Banks 'Ports of Call' Ceramic Wall Tiles Available in various colours and designs to co-ordinate with Jeff Banks wallcoverings. Inset. 15 x 15cm. Box of 6. Border. 15 x 7.5cm. Box of 6. Plain. 15 x 15cm. Box of 18. (Not shown). **£6.99** per box

Black & Decker Hedge Master 421 360 watts, 42cm cutting length. Dual action steel blades. 4.3kg and 12m cable. **£54.50**

Black & Decker Hedgehog 6125908 380 watts, 51cm blade length. 2.5kg. Improved safety with two handed switch and 12m cable. **£69**

Black & Decker Manual Feed Strimmer S122c 270 watts, 23cm cutting width, manual line feed and 6m cable. Was \$22.99 **£19.99**

SAVE £3

Find any of them for less locally & we'll refund **DOUBLE THE DIFFERENCE**



EARN TESCO CLUBCARD POINTS AT B&Q

Does not apply to B&Q Warehouse or B&Q Depots.



OPENING HOURS Monday-Saturday: 10am-6pm. Most B&Q Depots & B&Q Warehouse (where permitted). Sunday & Bank Holiday: 10am-5pm. Certain size hours may vary, please phone your nearest store to confirm.

BRITAIN'S BIGGEST DIY CHAIN - FOR YOUR NEAREST STORE PHONE 0181 446 4146

Internet: <http://www.bq.co.uk>

Any Season Price products are clearly marked on-site. If you find any for less locally we will refund double the difference. All in line with the lower price in any other store and not via call centre. All prices are subject to change without notice. This excludes price comparisons made with B&Q Warehouse or B&Q Depot. Offers may vary at B&Q Warehouse and B&Q Depot. Sales shown are approximate. Offer subject to availability. Please return to check before spending.

B&Q

YOU CAN DO IT WHEN YOU B&Q IT!

هنا من الأصل

Indonesia
locked by
currency
collapse

Italians held
Yemen tribe

inside north korea



Haves: Offspring of the party élite at a special crèche

Photograph: Stephen Vines

If you are going to have your hotel room broken into and your belongings thoroughly searched, it is generally advisable to have professionals on the job.

North Korea, which is not famous for international expertise in many things, must, however, be a contender in the search, surveillance and bugging stakes.

I can vouch for its expertise. Within hours of arriving in the North Korean capital, Pyongyang, and being whisked out to see a display of acrobatics, a performance art curiously helmed by all Communist regimes, my belongings back at the hotel had been searched. I only know this because I happened to be carrying some packs of small cigars.

The seal on each pack was neatly slit open. Nothing was stolen from the baggage and everything, including the cigars, was carefully replaced.

Following a trip out of town

there must have been another search, as I returned to find my shortwave radio unable to pick up the BBC World Service. Presumably the paranoid people who run North Korea suspected the Sony Corporation of Japan had equipped me with a radio receiver which also acted as a transmitter. Alas, this is not so, but the search for evidence clearly involved changing the radio's various settings and pushing a small switch which distorts the sound.

I conservatively estimate that I, and a colleague from New Zealand, were under surveillance for at least 95 per cent of the time we were in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

We had two minders and a driver (the minders also have to mind each other). Our telephones and rooms were huddled and it was clear our every move was shadowed.

The forces of coincidence are inadequate to explain how it was that one of the minders would

always appear just as we were finishing a meal, or happen to be in the hotel lobby every time we attempted to leave. A journalist's visa was out of the question for visiting North Korea, so we came as tourists. It probably took the minders a day and a half to work out that we were journalists.

That was when the questions about the kind of work we did started to flow thick and fast.

It might be thought that the breaking of our cover would rapidly lead to expulsion but, strangely, this is not how things are done in North Korea. Instead of expulsion you get involved in an elaborate, sometimes uncomfortable game with your minders. You ask to see this and that and they find a thousand and one harry excuses why this cannot be done.

For example, we were in Kaesong, near the border with South Korea. The previous day an aid official told us about

From famine to smiling faces: the twisted reality the party minders make sure you see

Stephen Vines in Pyongyang

visiting an orphanage in the city where the children were in pretty bleak condition.

Could we visit the orphanage? The first response was that it was difficult because it was not on the itinerary, which included visits to various historical sites. We admitted to being historically ignorant and wishing to remain so. The minders mulled this over and took us to a hotel where the head of security for the area happened to be in the lobby.

He told us the situation in Kaesong was tense and explained how difficult it would be to allow deviations from fixed itineraries. We persisted. Phone calls were made. Finally there was an answer.

We were told that, given the co-operative nature of Korean society, there were very few orphans and therefore hardly any to see.

This was a lie. How about going back to Pyongyang and visiting a crèche? they said. It



Have-nots: North Korean children at an orphanage in Huichon

Photograph: Reuters

seemed better than viewing some bells once rung by the wicked, decadent monarchs who once ruled Korea.

The crèche turned out to be a haven for the children of the party élite. It was devoid of the privations commonplace in a land ravished by famine and shortages of every kind.

Typically, the Koreans wanted to show us how well they were doing. Inadvertently they had given us a peek at the way the élite is living while the rest of the nation makes do on practically nothing.

The pride of the regime, and its unwillingness to admit the scale of the disaster it is inflicting on its people, leads it to invest in the most ludicrous schemes to erect an edifice of well-being.

That is why, for example, there are magnificent highways leading out of the capital to the southern border and up north to the centre of the country, where a massive shrine to the Great Leader, Kim Il Sung, and the Dear Leader, Kim Jong Il,

pierces the tranquil countryside. There is practically no traffic on these roads. The fuel shortage alone explains why this is so.

Yet the road going south even has a deserted highway restaurant built as a bridge spanning the road below.

Goodness only knows what kind of food could be obtained there. We made do with a cup of indifferent tea and a bottle of water.

The tricky times come when you try to take photographs. On the one occasion when we were able to spend any time alone walking the streets of the capital, we found ourselves being shadowed by two unfriendly looking men who did little to disguise their interest in our activities and seemed always to be going in the same direction as ourselves.

After this incident there was a stand-off with the minders, who demanded we hand over film shot by my colleague.

The reason given was that in

taking a picture of a matron in a maternity hospital, she might have cut off the head of either the Great or Dear Leader, who were depicted in a mural in the background.

Nothing was said about the street scenes we had been photographing. I am still not quite sure how we got out of this one, although it took about 12 hours to do so.

In the end one of the minders said: "You must promise not to publish this picture."

It was the nearest they came to mentioning that we were reporters. We politely ignored the implication of this remark and no more was said.

Despite the Orwellian tinge of the country, the people, including the minders, were remarkably friendly and, in a Korean sort of way, remarkably helpful.

It is tantalising to imagine how they would fare under another kind of system. This is the last of a three-part series

MAJOR SERVICE

**FREE MOT
WORTH £29* WITH
A MAJOR SERVICE**

- 'M' reg. due for MOT this year
- Diesels and Cats welcome
- Free re-test if necessary
- MOT can be taken at any time

TYRES

**FREE VALVE
AND BALANCE
WHEN YOU BUY 2 OR MORE TYRES**

TYRES FITTED FROM ONLY £9.99			
New Steel Radials from only £14.99 (135 x 12)	155 x 13 TR	£18.99	185/60 x 14 HR £29.99
	175/70 x 13 TR	£26.99	195/60 x 14 HR £39.99
DUNLOP from only £27.99 (135 x 13)	155/70 x 13 TR	£38.99	185/60 x 14 HR £54.99
	175/70 x 13 TR	£44.99	175/65 x 14 TR £57.99

ALL PRICES INCLUDE VAT

An additional charge will be made for new valves and wheel balancing

Offers subject to availability. Opening times and days may vary. Halfords reserve the right to alter services offered. Halfords Ltd, Icknield Street Drive, Washford West, Redditch, Worcs. B98 0DE.

**FREE MOT
WITH A MAJOR
SERVICE**

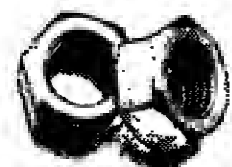


- * The price we quote is the price you pay - no hidden extras.
- * All work carried out by fully qualified technicians.
- * All parts and workmanship guaranteed for 12000 miles or 12 months, whichever comes first.

HALFORDS

GARAGE SERVICING

WE'RE



ABOUT CARS

BRAKES

**FREE BRAKE
CHECK
NOW AVAILABLE**

PRICES FROM	
BRAKE PADS FROM £19.99	
FORD ESCORT FROM	£19.99
VAUXHALL ASTRA FROM	£24.99
FORD MONDEO FROM	£32.99
FIAT TEMpra FROM	£34.99
RENAULT CLIO FROM	£36.99
AUSTIN MAESTRO FROM	£36.99

BUY NOW PAY LATER

**PAY NOTHING
FOR 4 MONTHS**

WHEN YOU SPEND OVER £100

PLUS

**EXTENDED CREDIT ALSO AVAILABLE
APR 34.9% (VARIABLE)****

Spend over £100 then at the end of the 4 months you can open a Running Account Credit Facility.

HOW TO FIND US

Just phone 0345 361361 for details of your nearest Halfords Garage

*This does not affect your statutory rights. Private vehicles only. **Normal price £29.42. **Written quotations available on request. Subject to status. Only available to persons over 18 years of age.

Douglas Gray

Robert Bryce

Births,
Marriages
& Deaths

Forthcoming marriages

Birthdays

Warren, engineering consultant, 71;
Air Vice-Marshal Sir William Wat-
ten, 58.

Anniversaries

Japan and Bernard Leach's Pottery", 2.30pm.

Appointments

Mr Rameshwar Singh and Mr Peter Milwyn Evans, to be district judges on the Wbler and Chester Circuit.

Synagogue services

Details of synagogue services to be held tomorrow may be obtained by telephoning the following. Sabbath begins in London at 8.09pm.

United Synagogues: 0181-343 8889. **Federation of Synagogues:** 0181-262 2263. **Union of Liberal and Progressive Synagogues:** 0171-580 1663. **Reform Synagogues of Great Britain:** 0181-349 4751. **Spanish and Portuguese Jews Congregation:** 0171-269 2573. **New London Synagogue (Masorti):** 0171-328 1026.

Changing of the Guard

The King's Troop Royal Horse Artillery mounts the Queen's Life Guard at Horse Guards, 11am; 1st Battalion the Royal Regiment of Wales mounts the Queen's Guard, at Buckingham Palace, 11.30am.

Magazines for men – but not for Mr Average

A new medium has come of age. As we report today, the best-selling men's magazine, *FHM*, has, for the first time, outstripped sales of *Cosmopolitan*, the most popular women's glossy. More than 600,000 men are expected to fork out £2.60 for September's edition. Add to that the massive sales for *Loaded*, *GQ* and the rest of the middle-shelf fraternity and you have the publishing phenomenon of the Nineties.

As a mirror to the Modern Man, these new magazines reflect an image of a sex-mad male, gagging for fresh erotic adventure, a shopaholic, who dresses in the most expensive designer brands, reads cool fiction, enjoys the most exotic holidays. This man drives cars à la Steve McQueen, is in tip-top shape physically and likes his footie, but never has smelly socks or had breath. Throughout his exertions, he remains immaculate, sporting a carefree stubble and a sophisticated fragrance. He's sexist, sure, and laddish, but in a charming, boyish sort of way, which only endears him to the bodice-hurting babes who wander through his life.

"Dream on," we suspect will be the response from most women – and from many men. The reality is a bit different. There may be a few urbane types who fit the mould, but most of us (a male leader-writer confesses) still dress badly, drive boring saloons and have not completely solved the odour problem. As

for sexual athleticism, most of us aren't quite up to the Olympian heights that seem to be expected.

In short, men's magazines are largely a fantasy, the glossy pornography of aspiration. And it isn't difficult to see who is in the driving seat. Leaf through the latest humper editions and what you will find is essentially a hymn to autumn fashion, as the men's monthlies sing their love songs to the likes of Armani, Hugo Boss, Paul Smith, Nike and Calvin Klein, to name but a few. For the truth is that these magazines are not so much about the modern male in general as about ways to persuade single young men to part with their considerable disposable incomes.

There is no great evil in that. In many ways, we wish good luck to the pioneers of this new type of publishing, who have spotted a smart way to make a mint. But there is also something sour about this success. For these innovators have clearly identified a need, a feeling among men that they want magazines devoted to their lives. Yet the new media ultimately fails to satisfy. There is a hrittle, surface feel about men's magazines that springs from their superficiality, their obsession with appearances, their preoccupation with the mechanics of sex, as though eroticism was no more than genital rubbing. What's missing is emotion, depth, the sense that they are about real lives. They promise much, but often feel hollow.



ONE CANADA SQUARE CANARY WHARF LONDON E14 5DL
TELEPHONE 0171-233 2000 / 0171-345 2000 FAX 0171-233 3405 / 0171-345 2435

Their hero is a narcissistic male, whose life is about premium lagers, designer drams and eau de toilette. They are thus a celebration of selfishness – *FHM* (acronym of For Him Magazine) says it all. They are cheerleaders for a rather narrow and particular lifestyle that has consumerism as its guiding principle. And so like many women's magazines, editorially subordinate to advertising, you find that most of the emphasis is on having or taking, with little thought devoted to that great aspiration – giving.

We're not asking for the purveyors of men's publishing to go on some

moral crusade. But they should recognise that there is a vast swathe of men to whom they offer little in the long run. Fantasies are thrilling at first, but once replayed again and again in the same predictable format, they grow dull.

Women's publishing has long realised that there is more to their readers' lives than achieving 20 orgasms a night. There are now a wide variety of publications catering for everything from young women just beginning sexual relationships to women getting married to those raising families and those in retirement. These publications also spend much of their time tackling

relationships, a dominant issue in everyone's lives, which might explain why so many men enjoy reading women's magazines.

There are a host of issues that men have to deal with, be it combining work with fatherhood, coping with downsizing or ageing well. The question of maintaining male identity and self-esteem without work faces many men, be they young unemployed, middle-aged sacked or retired and lost. But these are not people the advertisers seek, so they aren't getting a look-in at *Loaded* and the rest at the moment. If you are old, you will not see yourself reflected in these publications. And if your goal as a male is to be a provider, a protector, a guide, even just an organiser of fun for children, you will find little to help you amid the hedonistic, escapist lifestyle that is advertised as the ideal for all men.

There are signs that men's magazines are maturing. The translation of James Brown from the editorship of *Loaded* to the chair at *GQ* suggests some growing up. But perhaps we will have to wait until he is a Dad before even his latest organ fully emerges from adolescence. Which is a pity. Because men need more. Just as there is more to feminism than Cosmo, so there is more to rethinking men than what we are offered at the moment.

America inevitably goes over the top, but we have something to learn from a

country where you will find whole bookshelves devoted to every aspect of male development. We're lagging behind here, stuck with magazines that might have been innovative in the early Nineties, but now seem glossily formulaic. A huge market awaits the publishing entrepreneur who has the courage to break out of the laddish lager.

A Duchess is inimitable

Being post-modern means wallowing in irony and parody, and it's hard work. The new Oasis album is an ironic tribute to the Beatles. Or is it ironic? Television spoofs of television, like the robotic newscasters in *The Day Today*, are so close that they obliterate the real thing. In *Private Eye*, satirical take-offs of *The Spectator* diary can be uncannily convincing. Now – it seemed obvious – they had migrated into *The Spectator* itself. Everyone in this office who read it agreed that the right-wing magazine's spoof diary of the Duchess of York was a very good joke. A little obviously fake, but funny. Except that it turns out the diary is genuine. She is exactly like her caricature, only a little more so. Unless, of course, she is having a post-modern joke on the rest of us? No. Somehow we don't think so, either.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Students fill that gap with vital work

Sir: While we welcome the Government's announcement that 19,000 deferred-entry students will be exempt from fees (report, 14 August), the problem for the community remains. Many young volunteers plan their voluntary service after 1 August.

The imposition of fees means that most young people will be obliged to work through a gap year to fund their college place. The Government's decision will withdraw much-needed volunteer energy that "gap" students invest.

Every year many thousands of young volunteers enable people with disabilities to live independently, mentor young offenders, raise reading levels in schools and care for homeless people.

Public and voluntary agencies involve thousands of such young people every year through Community Service Volunteers. We know that without their commitment many vulnerable people will suffer.

Moreover, the experience and the responsibility young volunteers enjoy helps them make more informed choices; and they become better citizens.

We fervently hope the Government will find a way to ensure that young volunteers can contribute to meeting the needs of the community in future years.

CHRIS DAVIES
Director of Social Services, Somerset County Council
ELIZABETH CROWTHER
Director of Social Services,
Corporation of London
IAN FISHER
Assistant Chief Probation Officer,
South Gloucestershire Probation Service

TONY LEVER
Director, Bradford Care Consortium
VERONICA NELMES
Chair of Social Services, Monmouth
NICOLAS STACEY
Chair, Thames Housing Association

Sir: The last thing Third World countries want is skill-less young people playing the volunteer dilettante for three months. (leading article, 13 August). What importance!

Since 1984 we have been sending three to five "skill-less" gap-year volunteers to teach for a whole academic year in the middle school in our link community of Gunjur in The Gambia. They live with Muslim African families in a community with no electricity, no access to clean water, no public sanitation system. They learn Mandinka, the local language, learn to eat with their right hands and mark written work by candlelight.

I would make two points. First, they are welcomed by the Gambian Ministry of Education, which recognises that they have a real contribution to make and are not displacing Gambian teachers. Many of them discover skills they did not know they possessed. The headmaster assures us that in the national league tables of examinations Gunjur school has improved as a result of the contribution these young people make.

Second, the experience changes their lives. Of the 56 volunteers who have taken advantage of this scheme, eight are back in Africa, having graduated and developed their skills, working for voluntary organisations. For example one woman has been working for three years in the slums of Cape Town



helping marginalised HIV-positive women to develop income-generating projects. Many others are in the "caring professions" in this country.

It would be a tragedy if these young people felt they were not able to take a gap year – a tragedy for them, a tragedy for the community of Gunjur and a tragedy for this country, which desperately needs young people who have a global view of the world and are committed to serve those who are less fortunate than themselves.

DR NICK MAURICE
Director,
The Marlborough Brandt Group
Marlborough,
Wiltshire

Sir: Your faint praise (leading article, 13 August) for "worthy" enterprises such as Community Service Volunteers is wrong to suggest that CSV recruits only from "among students who can afford to do voluntary work". All CSVs are provided with food, accommodation, travel and £23.50 per week allowance.

The 4,000-plus volunteers are a cross-section of their generation in terms of educational attainment, ethnic origin and gender and no one is rejected. Their help is urgently needed.

ELIZABETH HOODLESS
Executive Director
CSV
London N1

Sir: The Government's small change of heart on tuition fees for gap-year students did not, contrary to your front page headline, signal a "victory".

The Government's plans remain essentially unchanged. It still

intends to abolish the student grant and introduce tuition fees. This could mean debts of £15,000 to £20,000 for a three-year degree.

This was not a U-turn by the Government but more of a slight

help in its drive to extinguish free university education. It is good that 20,000 students will be spared these debts, but what about the other 60,000 of this year's A-level graduates and the countless thousands of generations to come who will be deterred from entering higher education if the Government is not forced to make a real U-turn?

CATH FLETCHER
Campaign for Free Education
Newcastle upon Tyne

Laws the drug barons love

Sir: It is indeed sad that the Government should show total lack of nerve over the call by one of its own MPs for a Royal Commission on drugs ("Calls grow for national debate on drugs", 11 August). It will never have a more comfortable majority to cushion itself against the uniformed prejudices of Middle England.

I was a drug education officer in the 1970s and nothing has changed since then except the initials of the drugs. Governments still feel the need to display "tough" postures and talk about "wars on drugs" rather than engage in informed and productive debate. The war against drugs was lost long ago.

PAUL EDWARDS
Exeter

The enemy has long been within our gates, encouraged and attracted by the fat profits that the illegality of drug use provides. The well-known effects of Prohibition on the US in the 1920s say everything that needs to be said.

In the 1970s we, as drug educators, were saying that the most dangerous thing about illegal drugs was their illegality. It creates a climate of excitement and daring around drug use that attracts young people experimenting with life. Illegality makes criminals of otherwise law-abiding young people, driving them into common cause with the drug suppliers.

Having developed a problem, illegality discourages people from seeking help and treatment at an early stage and leads them into criminal activity to pay the high prices that illegality promotes. Treatment programmes often suffer from the need to reinforce the "tough" stance of their supporting governments, so that heroin maintenance schemes are discontinued in favour of methadone, a worse drug but with a "cleaner" image.

Those who have most enthusiasm for keeping drug use illegal and are most against informed debate are the drug barons themselves. The day we begin treating drug use and abuse as a social problem to be addressed rather than as a criminal activity to be punished is the day their profits tumble and their business withers.

PAUL EDWARDS
Exeter

Families who suffer in silence

Sir: The Government's decision to review whether more can be done to tackle domestic violence is very welcome (report, 12 August).

We are aware of the lasting effects domestic violence has on women and children. Research shows that in nine out of 10 cases of domestic violence in families, the children are in the same room, or in the next room, when the violence takes place. Children have told us of attempting to protect their mother, or of being attacked themselves.

However, as you say, many incidents go unreported. Awareness of the extent of the problem will be a welcome first step.

But awareness alone is not the answer. Women, and research shows it is usually women, experiencing domestic violence need to be able to seek help for themselves and their children without feeling that they will be blamed. We have found that women often delay seeking help because they fear that they will lose their children and that professionals do not always understand that fear.

There is a lack of information and guidance for professionals, whether they be teachers, social workers or staff at playgroups, on dealing with disclosures of domestic violence. That lack prompted us to publish a set of practice guidelines earlier this

year. But much more needs to be done to make sure that fewer women and children have to suffer in silence.

CAROLINE ABRAHAM
Head of Public Policy
NCH Action For Children
London N5

Image problem

Sir: It goes without saying that everything Peter Mandelson does is carefully weighed in terms of public reaction and press effect. He used his interview with Donald MacIntyre (14 August) to defend himself against accusations of being Mandelson the Manipulator and to present the "I'm just beavering away for the good of the nation" image.

This was bound to happen at some point. What's surprising is that he has had to do this after such a short time into Tony Blair's hoped-for two terms.

DAVID MUNGALL
Glasgow

Political animals

Sir: If the future of British politics is in the hands of a small coterie who are career politicians ("Blair's babes nudge for places at the top table", 14 August) then let us hope that the rules of inbreeding prevail.

What experience will this group bring to government in the future? Time to change the rules and ensure that we have government by those who have a direct experience of life before they enter politics.

JONATHAN YOUNG
Chislehurst, Kent

Chance to curb the arms bazaar

Sir: Jack Lang's call for the French government to follow Robin Cook's lead on an ethical approach to arms exports is significant ("French take up Cook's arms challenge", 13 August). The key to responsible control of the arms trade lies in international co-operation to defeat the argument "If we don't sell, someone else will".

A European code of conduct on weapons sales is coming closer to reality. France and Britain have long been the obstacles to such a move but the change of government on both sides of the Channel signals an historic opportunity.

The forthcoming British presidency of the EU (January-June 1998) provides the perfect time to take an initiative to establish a code that would help to prevent arms exports to countries that abuse human rights, regions of instability, military dictators and external aggressors. With the US Congress currently discussing similar legislation, there is a chance to restrain 80 per cent of the global arms bazaar. It should not be missed.

PAUL EAVIS
Executive Director
Safeworld
London WC1

Battles of the grouse moor

Sir: Your article on the start of the grouse-shooting season ("A lovely morning, but not for everyone", 12 August) failed to mention the importance of grouse shooting for heather moorland and the wildlife that it supports.

The uplands and heather moorland in particular provide one of the best-managed wildlife habitats, when managed for shooting. Such moors have more diverse flora and fauna than those that are unmanaged, which are often overgrazed or become afforested. In Wales 28 out of 34 major grouse moors have been lost to forestry in the last decade.

Heather moorland supplies 33 bird species, which a typical haggard moor provides sustenance and shelter for only 15. Birds supported on heather moorland include merlin, golden plover and curlews. Populations of golden plover have been seen to increase directly in proportion to the standard of grouse management.

LESLEY FERGUSON
Head of Media Relations
The British Association for Shooting and Conservation
Wrexham, Chwyd

Sir: Your report on the alleged incidents on the Durham grouse moors ("Saboteur violence wrecks grouse-shooting party", 13 August) seems to be drawn entirely from Durham police and British Field Sports Society press releases. There was another party involved in the incident, the hunt saboteurs.

No saboteurs were wearing "ski masks" – the temperatures on the moor were in the eighties and bikinis tops, T-shirts and shorts were the order of the day (although not for the police). As for people carrying "staves", this implies a stick the size of a fence post, and that was most certainly not the case. One disabled saboteur was carrying a walking stick.

PAUL GAMMON
Hunt Saboteurs Association
Brighton, East Sussex

analysis

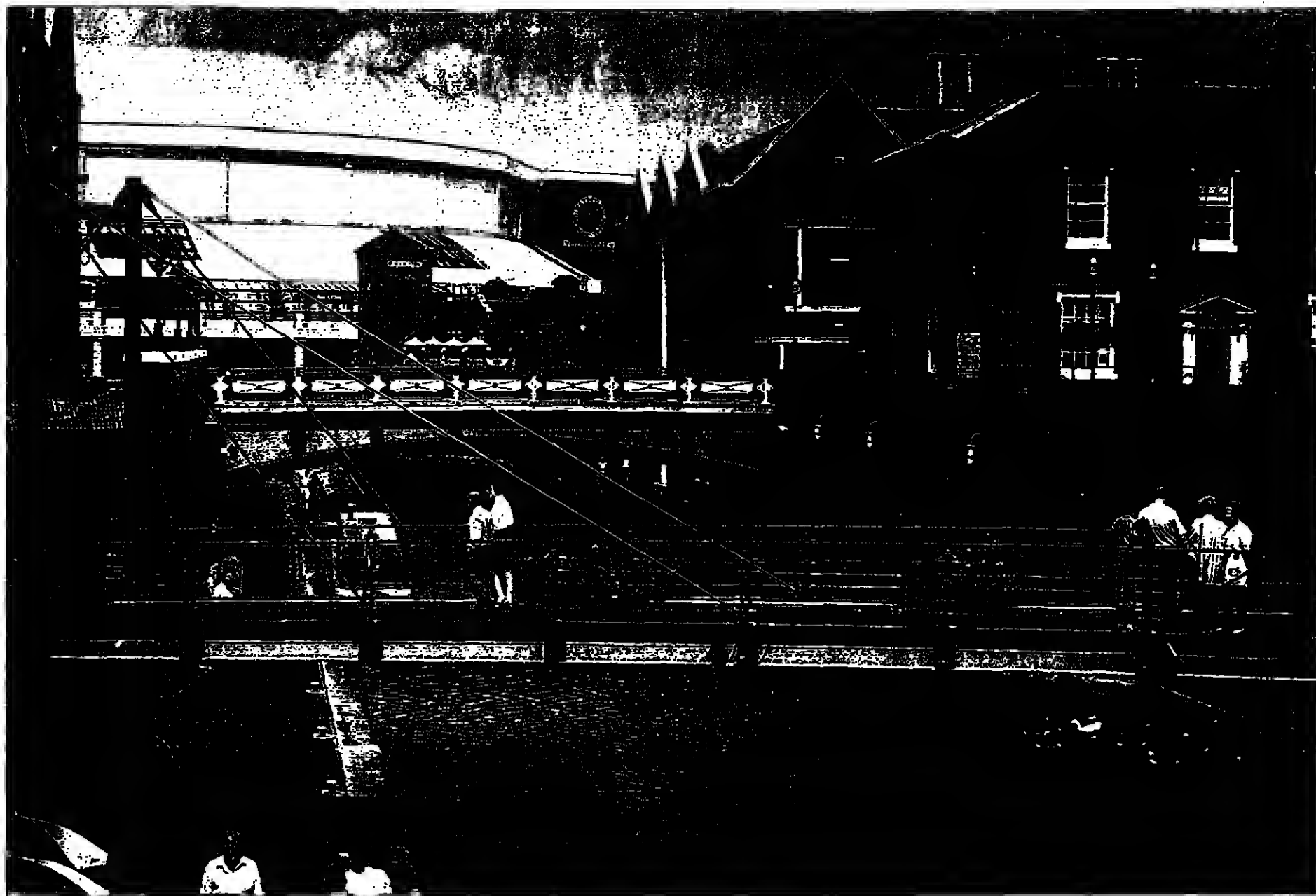
Aggressive marketing and a 'can do' attitude have transformed the derided home of 'Crossroads' into a thriving modern city with a global perspective, says Michael Streeter

Jane Austen started it. It was her character, the snobby Mrs Elton, who uttered a view of Britain's least-loved city which has stuck as firmly as grime to an Industrial Revolution chimney stack. "One has no great hopes from Birmingham," she declares grandly in *Emma*. "I always say there is something direful in the sound."

The contemporary, "sophisticated" metropolitan view is hardly any different. Negative associations with the city are endlessly trotted out, wherever two or more Londoners are gathered together: *Crossroads*, Spaghetti Junction and the unsightly Bull Ring.

Last week you could almost touch the scornful glee with which some in the national media greeted the announcement that the Midlands city is to play host next year to the Eurovision Song Contest. The continent's longest-standing television joke meets Britain's most-ridiculed city. The coverage moved one senior Birmingham businessman to comment: "We know it's irresistible to some parts of the media, the jokey references about Birmingham and the Eurovision Song Contest. But it's an event we've worked very hard to get and we're very proud to have got it."

That remark sums up much about the Brummie attitude to life, work and their place in Britain. For while the city may be a prophet of enlightened marketing without honour in its



Could this be Birmingham?



And not a road in sight: main photograph, the refurbished Worcester and Birmingham canal. Above, from left, typical offerings from the NEC: Cruft's Dog Show, 'Gladiators' and ITV's monarchy debate



Main photograph: Peter Macdiarmid

own land, to much of the outside world Birmingham is a growing success story. And to the city's key entrepreneurs and politicians, the chance to display its wares to a European television audience of around 300 million is too good to miss. And as an added incentive, the event will pump around £4m into the regional economy.

However, Eurovision is just a small part of the story. Barry Cleverdon, chief executive of the NEC Group which will stage the event next May, describes it as the "icing on the cake". He points to the array of events the city will host next year. These include the G8 Summit, the British International Motor Show and the Lions Club International Convention - billed as the highest convention in the world. It already stages Cruft's Dog Show every year and is now attracting the prestigious Confederation of British Industry conference, which normally switches venues, each year.

The National Indoor Arena, from where Eurovision will be

broadcast, already stages the television show *Gladiators* - and earlier this year it hosted a live television debate on the future of the monarchy. Rather like the city itself, the programme was lambasted by the critics for its vulgarity but proved popular with the TV viewing public who tuned in in their millions to watch and take part in a vote.

Such events are just one sign of what some call the renaissance of the city. It boasts "more canals than Venice", has a new and much-admired Symphony Hall, plans to redevelop large sections of the much-derided 1960s centre in the next five years, and comes top of a list of "desirable locations" for businesses. The city leads the way in Britain in business tourism - income from conferences and their spin-off opportunities for local hotels, restaurants and leisure - and has won new investment from BMW and Jaguar in its traditional manufacturing base.

Suddenly, Birmingham is the place to be. At least for those from abroad who probably know more about Birmingham, Alabama than Britain's second city, and who approach the place with an unbiased mind. Barry Cleverdon, an adopted Brummie who was born in the East End of London, admits it is far easier to "sell" Birmingham to foreign business people than to fellow Britons. "They don't have any preconceptions and are generally impressed by what they find."

Despite lingering consumer resistance in this country, Mr Cleverdon enthuses about what he calls the new spirit abroad in the region. "There is a real buzz about the place, things are happening. I've been here for 21 years and it really gets in the blood."

The quiet re-emergence of Birmingham should come as no surprise to historians. According to Philip Calcutt, a native Brummie and marketing director of the Birmingham Marketing Partnership, which straddles the public and private sectors and co-ordinates the promotion of the city, Birmingham has "re-invented" itself several times before.

Although warranting a mention in the Domesday Book, it was at the time scarcely more than a hamlet. It moved through the Middle Ages as a craftsman's centre and later achieved modest prominence as a centre for armaments - swords then guns - in the 17th and 18th centuries. It was only late in the 18th century and the

beginning of the 19th that Birmingham became widely known nationally as one of the main forces of the Industrial Revolution: James Watt, the Scottish engineer who invented the steam engine, worked in the city.

The second great era came later in the 19th century when under Joe Chamberlain, Birmingham, by now firmly established as a manufacturing centre for country and Empire, also became a model for urban planning and municipal governance. The city survived well enough on its manufacturing base, later moving into the motor trade, until modern times - then the wheels fell off the city's prosperity in the early 1980s recession.

Mr Calcutt recalls the shock to the collective system that this reversal caused. "You have to remember that until the 1970s there was in effect full employment in the city. You could leave a job one day and get a new one the next," he says.

Along with economic troubles, Brummies were confirmed

in their cultural role in Britain, the butt of humour and ridicule. The cultural nadir - in a city where Simon Rattle and his City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra were for many a lone beacon - was reached with *Crossroads*. This now defunct soap opera's quivering sets, smaller-than-life characters and wooden acting convulsed a nation into unintentional laughter.

It got worse. The name of the most famous character, Beany, became a slang word for a stupid person, one reportedly used until recently by British troops to describe the locals in the Falkland Islands. (According to army legend, when the soldiers were ordered not to use the derogatory term, they rechristened the Falklanders "stills" - as in "still Bennies".)

The horrors of the city centre and the concrete hell of Spaghetti Junction simply added to the image of dreariness in the nation's mind. But above all was the accent. This nasal sound, much mimicked, emerged in a recent survey as the accent least likely to impress a prospective employer. In one industrial tribunal, an employee claimed she was sacked simply because of her local vowel sounds. Although the BBC has made efforts to recruit more Brummie accents into mainstream broadcasting, they are still rarely heard, and when they are, the impression is not wholly favourable. Brummie character Jack Wooley, the hotel owner in *The Archers*, is depicted as an amiable but bumbling man.

Yet this constant, if gentle, barracking seems to have acted as a spur to Birmingham

rather than causing lastip resentment. "What's the point in being chippy about it?" asks Philip Calcutt. "There is anance, but the best way to get back at them is not to whine but to get out and show them."

This combination of blood-mindedness and memory scarred by recession became essential ingredients in the city's new success. In the face of much criticism - it was referred to as a white elephant - the city council funded the National Exhibition Centre much later came the Convention International - Convention Centre and the Symphony Hall. The NEC Group, with its tally of visitors, brings an estimated £438m of business to the regional economy each year, a figure likely to increase by £10m when more exhibition halls are added. The centre also supports around 17,000 jobs - important in a region with unemployment above the national average.


At the end of the 1980s, and with central government funding cuts undermining council attempts to revitalise the city, a collection of Birmingham's movers and shakers decided more was needed. In 1993, they formed the Birmingham Marketing Partnership, which is now held up as a model of how a city should market its affairs. This was another sign, says Mr Calcutt, of the city's "can do" approach.

There is no reason in geographical terms for Birmingham to exist. It has no river, no coast and no coalfield. Its history is of a working city. "He recalls the attention focused on the plights of some cities in the early 1980s - he mentions Liverpool - but says that never happened with Birmingham. "Birmingham just gets on and does it. In the recession the reaction was not to whinge but to get out there and do it. It was obvious that Whitehall would not be the source of a large amount of funding to regenerate the city."

Equally, local politics, though hither enough, have avoided the extremism that has afflicted other councils. "The city has veered between Tory and Labour, which has led to political pragmatism about putting Birmingham first. There is a high degree of consensus about what is good for the city," he says.

The city is realistic about its role alongside the capital, I which Birmingham lost the bid for the Millennium Exhibition (though the city is planning its own "complementary" celebrations) but it is thinking hard about its global role. "What we are trying to become is a European city," says Mr Calcutt. "A bit like Barcelona, Madrid, or Lyon to Paris."

Barry Cleverdon, credited as a major figure in the city's success, believes Birmingham can achieve its goals as long as it stays "hungry". "We are beating competition from cities such as New York and Hong Kong because we're Birmingham. Because we're Birmingham we have to try that much harder. And we are happy to do that."



£100,000 OF LIFE INSURANCE FROM £8.73 A MONTH*

- Civil Servants
- Town Hall Employees
- Teachers
- Lecturers
- Post Office Staff
- NHS Staff
- Police
- Nurses
- Fire Service
- Prison Officers
- Ambulance Service

It only costs a little to leave them a lot

A Zurich Municipal Term Assurance Policy can provide £100,000 for your family if you die. And if you work in the public sector, you get a 15% discount which means you could pay a monthly premium of just £8.73*. It's easy, too - a phone call can secure immediate cover for a few minutes. Call us now to find out more. One day, your family might be very glad you did.

LIFE INSURANCE
0800 147 147

Open: 9am-5pm Mon-Fri, 9am-1pm Sat
For your security, all telephone calls on the above number will be recorded and monitored.

PLEASE QUOTE REF: LINT508

ZURICH MUNICIPAL
Forming part of the Public Sector

*Premium of £8.73 includes public sector discount. Example given is a 10-year level term assurance policy for a married, non-smoking, 30-year-old female local government clerical officer. The premium quoted may be varied according to individual circumstances and is subject to acceptance at ordinary rates. Premiums are dependent on a number of factors and in particular are higher for males, smokers and older ages.

Zurich Municipal is a trading name of Zurich Life Assurance Company Limited, which is regulated by the Financial Services Authority, for life assurance and investment business and is a member of the Association of British Insurers. Zurich Municipal markets the life products of Zurich Life only and does not provide financial advice. Zurich Life Assurance Company Ltd is registered in England No. 410109. Registered Office: Zurich House, 100 Bishopsgate, London EC2N 3AP.

Offer also applies to spouses

Holidays? I always have a whale of a time

Summer is a bad season for big men. I will not dwell on the impact of high humidity and no air conditioning; repeated applications of industrial strength anti-perspirant will usually mitigate the worst effects of excessive heat. No, it's the heat that I contemplate every year with the terror of anticipated humiliation.

I have always loathed sunbathing in public on the sand, even when I was young and very thin. At 13, my ribs were as visible as the keys on a xylophone. You could have hung suits from my collarbone, or played a timpani concerto on my vertebrae. The only muscle that I could flex visibly was the one that I took such pains to conceal, wrestling with yards of towelling and soggy costume, like Harry Houdini's incompetent younger brother. And aware - always - of the manifest absurdity of trying to hide what no one wanted to find.

When the clothes were off, all my cerebral advantages were effectively destroyed. The world ceased to be one where civilised

and artistic virtues were applauded, even by the middle classes. Other boys were better swimmers, braver divers, or keener-eyed beach batsmen. With nothing on, we were - all mere animals. Which is great if you are fleet of foot, swift of swimsuit, and dull of mind. But not if you are swift of mind and dull of swimsuit.

It is appalling that - nearly three decades later - my feelings about walking nearly naked along the soft strand have not changed at all. Next week, when the giggling, fighting, struggling band of mini-Aaronovitchs can be seen on the coasts of Britain, observers will be able to mark the sad, unhappy figure trudging, fully clothed in their noisy wake.



David Aaronovitch

What's my problem, now? It can hardly be my ribs. Those have not been seen for a long time. My eldest daughter is seven, she has four extant grandparents, but she has never met her father's ribs. Nevertheless, I am a fine figure of a man. In fact, I am nearly a fine figure of two men. For the truth is that my diet and

exercise season is now out of sync with my bared-body season. In the past I have managed to ensure that the first roughly preceded the second, but this year I have failed completely.

All right, says the calming Voice of Reason, if you are so ridiculously self-conscious, are there not all kinds of little stratagems that you can affect? Such as wearing a voluminous black T-shirt, which can always be explained by the very sensible desire not to contract some virulent form

of sun-induced skin cancer. Most large men have the legs of their thinner, former selves anyway. Women may put weight on around their calves and thighs, but men do not, their large tumesque limbs, like a whale on a stick. Cover the tumesque limbs, and you could be Damon Albarn. So put on your shades and swagger. But this is a lie. And it is one that doesn't really work. In print I can fool myself - and you. I can be anything, and can represent myself as anything. Today I might wish to suggest physical prowess in sports or love, tomorrow, a life spent pole-vauling and writing metaphysical poetry. As long as I know what to say about it, I can be it. This cannot operate in the flesh. The magic must be dissipated, however large the T-shirt.

So, asks the exasperated VoR, who cares? Who's even looking? I cannot be under the impression, can I, that all those bikini-clad lovelies - who trip through the dunes - a mob with beauty - are waiting only for a weight loss of seven pounds before casting their skimpy costumes aside and demanding satisfaction there and then, behind the beach huts? What would I be other than one more fat dad in a colony of fat dads, another beached sea-lion? The worst that could happen is that some Sunday newspaper supplement happens to send its photographer to do a picture feature on "the British by the sea", and one is immortalised on its cover, one's gut flubbing over the front of one's Speedos. So (insists the Voice) do what the others do, and go for it; exult in it. Stick that belly out as far as it will go, get it horribly suborned, and parade its piebald vastness in front of the whole beach. Hell, show it to everyone in the restaurant too. Everyone else does.

Well, I'm sorry, but I can't do it. Once you start admitting things to yourself, then you are on the slippery slope to senility. You stop caring about what you look like, what you wear and how you behave. And I do so hate it when men let themselves go.

Miles Kingston is on holiday

business & city

FINANCIAL JOURNAL
OF THE YEAR

Business news desk: tel 0171-293 2636 fax 0171-293 2096
DEPUTY BUSINESS & CITY EDITOR: MICHAEL HARRISON

Scottish puts Ulster Television independence at stake

Cathy Newman

Ulster Television, one of the few remaining independent ITV companies, looked increasingly vulnerable to a takeover last night after Scottish Media Group bought a 13.1 per cent stake yesterday and said it could not rule out a full bid.

Andrew Flanagan, managing director of Scottish, said last night: "No company in its right mind would say never [to a full bid], because you don't know

what the circumstances would be in the future."

Under Takeover Panel rules, Scottish is forbidden from buying Ulster outright within three to six months. However, Scottish could increase its stake in the group to 20 per cent in a week's time, and up to 30 per cent the week after that. Mr Flanagan said that if the price was right and the stock was available, Scottish would consider increasing its stake to the 30 per cent limit.

Mr Flanagan said that Scottish, which has just bought Gramplan Television for £105m, shared a view with Ulster that the regional identity of ITV should be preserved. He strongly disagreed with the opinion of Gerry Robinson, chairman of Granada Group, that all ITV should be owned by one company within a decade.

The closer involvement between the two companies also made sense, Mr Flanagan said,

as advertising sales for both were handled by TSM.

Mr Flanagan also implied that the purchase - "well-planned over a number of weeks", and taking Scottish's stake in Ulster to almost 15 per cent - was in part a defensive move against the three big ITV players, Carlton Communications, Granada Group, and United News & Media. He added: "The issue in ITV is that with Granada, Carlton and United, you need more weight."

Ulster, Border Television and Channel Islands Communications are the last three independent ITV companies, after a frenzy of consolidation in recent months. Border was, until yesterday, seen as a more likely takeover target for Scottish because of the sensitive political situation in Northern Ireland.

However, Mr Flanagan said yesterday: "I'm not quite sure where the politics gets into this. Lots of companies invest in Northern Ireland; I don't see

what is different about us investing in Northern Ireland."

He added that Ulster was a more appealing investment than Border because of its size and "economic performance". Mr Flanagan said Border was "not the most attractive company on the ITV scene".

Analysts said the investment by Scottish made sense, and one commented that a takeover was "inevitable". However, another said a potential merger was worrying from a regulatory

point of view, as Scottish was developing a "strong regional monopoly".

"For some reason the regulatory authorities are letting them," the analyst added. As well as having control over the Scottish and Gramplan ITV franchises, the company also owns the *Herald* and *Evening Times* in Glasgow.

Mr Flanagan dismissed talk of regulatory concerns, saying that if Scottish were to take over Ulster it would have only a 4 per

cent audience share by contrast with Granada's 12 per cent since its acquisition of Yorkshire-Tees Television. No one company can, under current legislation, own more than 15 per cent of the audience share.

Since the beginning of the year, consolidation of the ITV network has gathered speed, with United News & Media snapping up HTV: Granada buying Yorkshire; and Scottish purchasing Gramplan.

Comment, page 17

Orange to accelerate £800m spending plan

Chris Godsmark
Business Correspondent

Orange, the UK's newest mobile phone network, yesterday unveiled ambitious plans to double its investment programme, spending an extra £400m through next year to improve signal coverage.

Hans Snook, group managing director, claimed the move, which would raise Orange's investment to £800m between now and early 1999, would remove the highest barrier to expanding British mobile phone ownership. He said research had shown 58 per cent of customers who left mobile networks did so because of weak signal strength.

Mr Snook claimed the accelerated investment programme, bringing forward spending originally scheduled for 2000 and beyond, would leapfrog expansion plans from Vodafone, Cellnet and One 2 One. "The primary factor that raises satisfaction is not price, it's coverage. We intend to set the agenda for the wire-free future."

He also unveiled plans for new services, including a high-speed data offering to allow customers to access the Internet and mobile handsets to replace telephone extensions in offices. Orange is also working with a UK university to develop a mobile phone which can send television pictures.

The UK mobile phone market has become increasingly competitive over the past year as the four operators have stepped up advertising campaigns. But subscriber growth in recent months has been more modest, particularly for market leaders Vodafone and Cellnet, as customers have left the networks. UK mobile phone ownership, at 13 per cent of the population, remains well below the 25 per cent and above in Scandinavia.



Hans Snook (left) and Graham Howe, Orange finance director. Photograph: Marina Imperi

The spending will increase the number of Orange signal stations from 2,900 to 6,000, filling in gaps between buildings in urban areas and improving coverage in the countryside.

Orange said it would raise its coverage from 95 per cent of the UK population to 98 per cent. By the end of 2001 the company said it aimed to have 10,000 base stations.

The company indicated it intended to build the new sites

more quickly to avoid potential conflicts with the Department of Trade and Industry, which has become concerned at their environmental impact. Orange is experimenting with base stations disguised as trees, though so far only two are operational.

Mr Snook said the investment, which would take Orange's total spending to more than £1.6bn, would be financed out of the group's existing resources. However the group is

negotiating with its bankers to refinance its £1.2bn of borrowings at a lower interest rate, reflecting the company's improving financial performance.

So far £870m of the facility has been drawn down, with £330m left for future projects. The loans are about 1.5 percentage points above short-term money-market interest rates.

Mr Snook said recent rises in interest rates would not make it harder for Orange to fund its

investment. "We're very well hedged into the future on interest rates and the fact that we may negotiate a larger borrowing facility doesn't mean it'll cost it more unless we draw on it."

Analysts yesterday welcomed the plans, but warned that the interest rate hikes made it harder to put a value on the group.

Orange shares, which rose 8.5p yesterday to 220.5p, have underperformed the stock market by 30 per cent since the

floatation in March 1996 at 205p a share.

Jim McCafferty, from stockbrokers ABN Amro Hoare Govett, said: "The management at Orange is very credible, but the higher interest rate environment could put the company's valuation under pressure."

Orange shares were also boosted by figures from the company showing a 13 per cent surge in average annual revenue per customer to £500. Its sub-

scriber base grew by 195,000 in the first half of the year, giving it 35 per cent of the increase in the market. Last month Orange signed up its millionth customer, raising its overall market share to 13.3 per cent.

Orange yesterday revealed a 41 per cent drop in losses in the first half of the year, to £74m, with turnover up 67 per cent to £427m. The group repeated its forecast that it would become profitable in 1999.

New mobile services

- Video phones
- Internet browsing
- Home shopping
- Online newspapers
- On-line financial services
- Narrow-band television
- Virtual banking
- Conference calling for up to six people at one time
- Roaming phones connected to office switchboards
- Link-up with high-speed digital data service (ISDN)

Albert Fisher calls off bid talks

Nigel Cope
City Correspondent

Albert Fisher, the struggling food group, stunned shareholders yesterday when it announced it had terminated talks that could have led to a takeover of the company.

Though Albert Fisher had never disclosed the identity of the bidder the market had always assumed it was American banana group Chiquita. The talks, which were first revealed in June, are understood to have foundered on disagreements over the price Chiquita was willing to pay. Consequently, Albert Fisher said it had not felt able to recommend the offer to shareholders.

Albert Fisher shares slumped 4.75p to 38.75p on the news as analysts rushed to downgrade their profit forecasts and break-up values of the sprawling group run by Stephen Walls.

The company said it has completed a review of its strategy, though it will not announce the details until later this month. It is expected to sell its seafood business, which is thought to be worth around £90m. The proceeds will fund a share buy-back or special dividend worth more than £100m. Other peripheral businesses are also expected to be sold.

Analysts said the disposal of the volatile seafood business, which has been hit recently by poor catches, would make the group a more attractive break-up target. Analysts are pencilling a possible break-up value of 47p per share. Most say a takeover of the whole group is unlikely as Albert Fisher retains too many poor businesses in commodity markets.

One food analyst said: "It's very disappointing. We were hoping this company's days were numbered."

Northern Ireland watchdog set to refer generators to MMC

Chris Godsmark
Business Correspondent

The Northern Ireland electricity regulator looks set to refer the three generating companies in the province to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission before the autumn, in a long-running dispute over power prices.

Independent research into the £300m generation market by the consultancy group London Economics was delivered to the regulator, Douglas McDoom, on Monday.

The document, commissioned by the Northern Ireland power watchdog, Ofreg, looked at the suggestions put forward by the generators which they hoped could avert an MMC referral.

Charles Coulthard, the deputy electricity regulator, de-

clined to comment on the likelihood of a referral. However, the offers of power price cuts are not thought sufficient to satisfy Ofreg.

Mr Coulthard said: "The report will give us a clear indication in policy terms. Douglas will then have to decide whether to refer the generators to the MMC. If we can get a solution, Douglas may accept it."

It would be the second MMC investigation into the Northern Ireland power market, where average domestic bills of around £320 are almost 20 per cent higher than in the rest of the UK. Northern Ireland Electricity (NIE) is locked in a dispute with Mr McDoom following an MMC probe into transmission and distribution price controls.

In a controversial move Mr McDoom has rejected the

MMC's recommendations, which would cut NIE's revenues by 25 per cent, as too lenient. He has instead proposed a cut of 29 per cent, opening a debate about the powers of utility regulators.

The London Economics report calculated the potential savings from changes to the generation market, which accounts for about 60 per cent of domestic bills.

Three companies took over the four power stations in the province at privatisation in 1992.

They include Premier, owned by BG, which operates the 1,000 megawatt Ballylumford power station.

One suggestion was to reform the wholesale power market, by allowing large industrial customers to negotiate direct contracts with the generators.

Under the present system all users have to buy their electricity from NIE, which has inflation-proof contracts with the generators lasting until 2010.

Generation charges in Northern Ireland of 4.2p a unit are much higher than in the UK. Ofreg has aimed to reduce the cost to 3.5p, while the London Economics calculations suggest the generators' own schemes would cut prices by up to 3.6p, though some of the savings could be much smaller.

Mr McDoom's predecessor had hoped to introduce a trading market for wholesale power in Northern Ireland, similar to the Electricity Pool in England and Wales, but the initiative was abandoned as too complex.

Another idea from the generators was to invest in more efficient power plants.

US growth sedate and inflation in check

Tom Stevenson
Financial Editor

US consumer prices are rising at their slowest rate for 11 years, official statistics showed yesterday. Government figures also showed the American economy was growing at a rate that meant interest rates were unlikely to rise for some time to come, analysts predicted.

Shares and bonds both rose in early trading yesterday in response to the data, which prompted one economist to say: "When you wrap it all up, all is well on the American scene. Growth is sedate and inflation is very much in check."

The consumer price index rose 0.2 per cent in July, the Labor Department said. Rises in food, housing and transport costs marginally outpaced a decline in energy costs and the first monthly fall in the price of healthcare for almost 22 years.

The rise in consumer prices was up from June's 0.1 per cent, but it left the increase for the first seven months of the year at just 1.5 per cent, less than half the rate of growth recorded in 1996.

Separately, industrial production slowed to a 0.2 per cent increase in July from June's 0.3 per cent rise. The fall followed figures earlier in the week showing producer prices falling for the seventh month in succession, the first time that had happened since 1991.

The pressure on interest rates was also eased by a large build-up in inventories, which rose in June for the sixth consecutive month.

The 0.7 per cent increase was the largest rise since April 1995 and is expected to lead to a slowing in economic activity in the second half of the year as unsold goods are pushed through the system.

Couple settle legal battle with Lloyds

Tom Stevenson
Financial Editor

A couple who successfully sued Lloyds Bank for negligence after a failed property development lost them money claimed yesterday to have won the final round of a seven-year legal battle. Julia Verity and Richard Spindler, who made legal history when the High Court ruled against Lloyds two years ago, said yesterday they had settled out of court a counter-claim by the bank.

The couple, an acupuncturist and teacher who already owned two houses when they took out a mortgage at the height of the late 1980s property boom, were awarded £77,500 damages in September 1995. The court ruled Lloyds had been negligent in advising them to buy a third property with a view to renovating it just before the housing market crashed.

They then faced bankruptcy six months later when, in a separate case, Lloyds was successful in a counter-claim against the couple to recover £104,000, after they had failed to service the debt on the investment property. The award included the outstanding loan on the property and other business and personal loans they had taken out with Lloyds.

The settlement announced yesterday followed an appeal by the couple against the counter-claim on the basis that the original £77,500 award had been incorrectly calculated. Specifically, they said, it did not take into account a loss incurred by

the couple when they sold one of their two existing properties to help pay their losses.

They said yesterday: "The overall effect of the two High Court judgments was that we owed the bank more money despite having proved that the bank's advice was negligent."

The settlement is understood to have drawn a line under the remaining debt owed by the couple to Lloyds. They said yesterday: "We are very glad and relieved that it is all over. It has been a long, arduous and painful journey through the legal process."

Lloyds Bank, which admitted it was constrained in what it could say about the case because of client confidentiality agreements, said: "We are very glad Mr Spindler and Mrs Verity have dropped their appeal and agreed to an out-of-court settlement. The bank has always made strenuous efforts to reach an out-of-court settlement with the couple."

Mr Spindler, 38, and Mrs Verity, 57, are now understood to be living together in Henley-on-Thames but to have decided to separate. In a joint statement, they added: "It is nine years since the negligent advice and our lives have been totally disrupted by being in such insurmountable debt."

When the first award was made against Lloyds there was speculation it would open a floodgate of claims against banks from people who had taken a gamble on the housing market only to see their investments turn sour as prices fell.

STOCK MARKETS						
Index	Close	Day's change	Change (%)	1996/97 High	1996/97 Low	Yield (%)
FTSE 100	5003.60	-72.20	-1.4	5086.80	4056.60	3.30
FTSE 250	4677.00	-23.40	-0.5	4729.40	4388.20	3.55
FTSE 350	2407.60	-30.40	-1.2	2438.00	2017.90	3.35
FTSE SmallCap	2234.30	+5.47	+0.2	2374.20	2178.29	3.21
FTSE All-Share	2348.96	-27.43	-1.2	2376.39	1989.78	3.34
New York	7935.62	-25.32	-0.3	8259.31	5032.94	1.61
Tokyo	19008.60	-90.61	-0.5	20681.07	17303.85	0.821
Hong Kong	16482.93	+95.52	+0.6	18673.27	12055.17	2.731
Frankfurt	4278.48	-84.61	-1.9	4438.93	2848.77	1.271

Statistics as of 14 August

INTEREST RATES

Short sterling*

Year	Rate
1980	7.00
1981	7.25
1982	7.40
1983	7.45
1984	7.40
1985	7.35
1986	7.30
1987	7.25
1988	7.20
1989	7.15
1990	7.10

UK medium gilt*

Year	Rate
1980	7.00
1981	7.25
1982	7.40
1983	7.45
1984	7.40
1985	7.35
1986	7.30
1987	7.25
1988	7.20
1989	7.15
1990	7.10

US long bond

Year	Rate
1980	7.00
1981	7.25
1982	7.40
1983	7.45
1984	7.40
1985	7.35
1986	7.30
1987	7.25
1988	7.20
1989	7.15
1990	7.10

* Data from Interest section

* Bond Yield

Money Market Rates

Index	1 Month	1 Year	Medium Bond (%)	Year Ago	Long Bond	(%) Year Ago
UK	7.06	7.80	7.09	7.77	7.11	7.89
US	5.66	6.16	6.37	6.48	5.92	6.73
Japan	0.50	0.66	2.13	3.19	-	-
Germany	3.12	3.50	5.71	6.28	6.42	-

* Benchmark Indices

MAIN PRICE CHANGES

Rises	Price	Change	% Change	Falls	Price	Change	% Change
Petrol	344	26	7.8	Oil	395	23.5	6.0
British Telecom	177.5	10.5	6.3	Chancellor's Gap	267.5	14	5.0
Independent Gas	945	35	3.8	Imp Chem Inds	1059.5	49	4.4

CURRENCIES						
Index	1 Month	3 Months	6 Months	1 Year	2 Year	3 Year
£/\$	1.5803	+0.20c	1.5519	-	-	-
£/¥	1.5835	+0.45c	1.5493	-	-	-
DM/\$	2.9944	-4.51c	2.2895	-	-	-
£/DM	182.527	-10.477	166.848	-	-	-
£/Index	100.7	-1.0	84.6	-	-	-

OTHER INDICATORS						
Index	1 Month	3 Months	6 Months	1 Year	2 Year	3 Year
Oil Brent	16.74	+0.31	20.73	-	-	-
Gold	326.15	+0.6	387.35	-	-	-
Gold	207.85	+1.73	249.73	-	-	-

كلوا من الاصل

Squeezing Orange until the pips squeak



COMMENT

'Orange is confident its balance sheet can withstand the pressure and points to a whole raft of reasons why - 35 per cent share of new subscribers, the lowest churn rate, etc. Why, at this rate, it might even make a profit next year'

Hans Snook, the man from Orange, is praying harder than most that the Monetary Policy Committee is right about the future direction of interest rates because he has just taken out an £800m bet on them staying roughly where they are.

It would take a long telephone call to explain all the details. Suffice it to say that because of the way Orange's future cash flows are valued, high interest rates do unpleasant things to its share price.

Since the business was floated in March last year, the shares have underperformed the market by a thumping 30 per cent (partly because of the slow ratcheting up of interest rates). This is despite the company having met all its internal targets for connections, revenues and "churn rates", the mobile industry's explanation of what happens when the first bill hits the doorman and the customer unplugs his telephone.

Now, however, Orange is gambling the share price and the rest of the farm on a huge expansion in both its services and network coverage which will involve bringing forward £400m worth of investment originally scheduled for the next century. Stand by for narrow hand TV, video telephony, home shopping and even virtual banking, all downloaded via your mobile. Soon they will have to have whole trains for mobile phone users, not just separate carriages.

Orange is confident its balance sheet can withstand the pressure and points to a whole raft of reasons why - a 35 per cent

share of new subscribers, the lowest churn rate in the industry, etc. etc. Why, at this rate, it might even make a profit next year.

The snag, as Orange tacitly admits, is that the mobile phone remains a far from perfect tool for communication which makes the idea of spending large sums to pump more information down it a doubly risky business. Users do not have to be in the Outer Hebrides to find it difficult picking up a signal.

That is why Orange is having to double its network of base sites at enormous cost just to increase coverage from 95 to 98 per cent of the country. Orange says this is a gamble worth taking since its research shows that more people are switched off mobiles by their poor coverage than their cost.

Time will tell. Orange's low churn rate partly reflects the fact that a larger number of its customers are still awaiting the chance to churn. The pips could really begin to squeeze then.

Same old story at Albert Fisher

Albert Fisher has been a whopping disappointment of a business and even now is being denied a swift and relatively painless death. Its mystery hider has disappeared, frightened no doubt by some of the horrors in the portfolio such as cockle collecting and halibut filleting.

So we are back to the same old story, collapsing share price, analysts reigning back forecasts, investors wondering why they bother holding the stock. Yet at this woefully underperforming business limps on there is talk that its chairman, Stephen Walls, is looking for a better job more commensurate with his abilities. If true, this is a hit rich. Since he was appointed non-executive chairman in July 1992 the shares have underperformed the FT All Share by a thumping 70 per cent. In that time profits of £21.5m have been transformed into losses of £110m last year. Margins are a pitiful 3 per cent.

A takeover would have secured a spectacular hat-trick of pay-offs for Mr Walls after hitting the jackpot at Plessey and Anglo Wireless. It is true that Mr Walls inherited a rag bag of low-margin food businesses spread across too many geographical areas. The criticism is that after five years in the post he has only succeeded in turning it into, well, a rag bag of low-margin businesses, spread across too many geographical areas. It is none too impressive. Before Mr Walls next jumps ship for another job, he should concentrate on making a better fist of the one he's got.

Scottish is right to bang its own drum

As fast as Gerry Robinson talks ITV into consolidating into one company, Gus MacDonald is erecting barbed wire around

the Celtic fringes of the television map. His latest foray - Scottish Media Group's purchase of a 14.9 per cent stake in Ulster Television - is designed to cement the links between those ITV companies who think that the future lies in regional diversity, not consolidation into one homogenised channel.

Of course Scottish has its own self-interest at heart. It already owns Grampian and, although it says it is not interested in Border, the more franchises it can bolt on the more difficult it will be for one of the big three to swallow Scottish without bumping up against the ownership ceiling.

But Scottish is surely right to bang the drum for independence and diversity in the face of the rapid annexation of the industry by Granada, Carlton and United News and Media.

There is scant evidence that programming would get any better, or appeal more widely to advertisers and overseas markets if 15 franchises were reduced to one.

The Scottish experience is that the further away viewers get from the metropolitan influences of London the less they watch a single national channel such as BBC, preferring instead to tune into local ITV. Scottish and Ulster also get a higher percentage of revenues from local as opposed to national advertising because advertisers, like viewers, prefer local programming.

This will not deter Granada's Mr Robinson from talking his book. But as long as Mr MacDonald's marauding parties are in

action, it reminds everyone that another and better alternative exists.

Glad to see the back of Julia and Richard

Just as the housing market threatens to overheat again, a blast from the past to bring everyone back to earth. Remember Julia Verity and Richard Spindler, the odd couple who took out a mortgage with Lloyds thinking the housing market was a one-way bet and then sued when, surprise, surprise, it turned turtle and left them in a sea of negative equity?

Well, they are back with the thrilling news that their seven-year legal battle with the bank is over with both sides having settled for a draw. Not quite a draw actually since Lloyds is almost certainly out of pocket because its counter claim was bigger than the award against it. "We have gained inner strengths and a resolve and determination that we could not have imagined we had in us," trills their press release.

Bully for them. For the rest of us the banks and building societies continue to value properties very conservatively for mortgage purposes, making it difficult for first-time buyers to join the market.

In part this is due to their experience with the likes of Julia and Richard. Lloyds is surely not the only one to be glad to see the back of them.

Sorrell refuses to rule out bid by WPP for CIA

Cathy Newman

Speculation intensified yesterday that WPP, the world's largest advertising and marketing group, could mount a bid for CIA, the media buying agency, after Martin Sorrell, WPP's chief executive, refused to rule out such a move.

WPP bought a 13 per cent stake in the group in June, although it is prevented from launching a bid within a year.

City analysts said CIA was looking vulnerable, but added that a hostile takeover was out of the question as the agency's directors and employees owned almost 40 per cent of the shares.

Mr Sorrell also appeared to veto breaking up WPP. An idea he is believed to have considered earlier this year.

"We are seeking to make the sum of the group's parts greater than the individual businesses," he said.

WPP's interims came in at the top end of analysts' expect-

tations. However, worries over the strength of sterling sent shares tumbling 7p to 266.5p in morning trading, although the stock recovered to close at 270p.

The share price fall could threaten Mr Sorrell's pay-out under a controversial incentive scheme. He stands to gain shares worth £3m if the stock remains over the 265p "trigger", reached last week, for 60 days.

Under the five-year scheme, Mr Sorrell could earn a total of £28m, including annual salary, bonuses and pension payments, if the share price reaches and maintains each target for 60 days.

Unveiling a 15 per cent increase in interim profits before tax to £78.3m, Mr Sorrell admitted the company had put in a good performance, but said he was never happy and there was always more to achieve.

Mr Sorrell warned that the group still needed to co-ordinate its operations more effec-

tively across the globe. "We have tremendous knowledge assets within the group that we are still failing to harness sufficiently," he said.

Mr Sorrell added that further co-operation was needed within the company's media buying and research divisions.

WPP's advertising agencies, J Walter Thompson and Ogilvy & Mather, were looking at merging their media buying and planning departments, he said.

Further small acquisitions remain likely and the announcement of a market research joint venture in China is expected imminently.

Emerging markets such as Asia-Pacific and Latin America were the most likely areas for future expansion, the company said.

WPP has bought back £22m worth of shares this year and Mr Sorrell said that a similar buy-back was "highly possible" next year.



Ronald Zimet: Freepages denied lasting damage resulting from his resignation Photograph: FT

Freepages on upward turn

John Willcock

Freepages, the AIM-listed telephone information service, whose shares were hit when former chairman Ronald Zimet became embroiled with Andrew Regan's failed attempt to take over the Co-op, reduced its losses in the third quarter of this year and appointed Cazenove as joint brokers to the company.

The appointment of Cazenove, one of the most blue-blooded of City firms, to operate alongside brokers Collins Stewart, was seen by observers as a significant step by Freepages away from the various co-operations which have hit it this year.

When asked whether Mr Zimet's resignation had done any lasting damage to Freepages, chief executive Robert Bonnier said: "No, I don't think so. Robert had no operational role in the company. He was chairman and that's all. We have a highly talented team here who continue to deliver good results."

Mr Zimet resigned from Freepages after failing to answer questions about a £2.4m payment he received from Andrew Regan's Hobson group two years ago, a payment for helping to negotiate an extended sup-

ply agreement with the Co-op.

Mr Zimet was replaced by Dick Eykel, 56, a non-executive director with Freepages since December. The payment to Mr Zimet's British Virgin Islands-based Trellis International was one of the issues the Co-op used to discredit Mr Regan's £1.2bn bid.

Freepages yesterday reported a pre-tax loss for the third quarter to June of £2.38m against a loss of £2.59m for the same period last year, with a loss per share of 0.81 pence (0.49p). The shares rose 15p yesterday to 38p.

The company provides phone callers with information on services in their locality, and receives fees from the local businesses that pay to be listed on its books.

Mr Bonnier says he expects the company's UK operations to break into profit "in the latter part of the next financial year". The overseas businesses, in particular the joint venture with VNU, would take longer to break even, he added.

Yesterday Mr Eykel said Freepages' compounded revenue growth rate during the first three-quarters of its 1996/97 financial year has been more than 32 per cent.

Maid seeks role in digital TV revolution

Cathy Newman

Maid, the electronic information group, is aiming for a slice of the action in the digital television revolution by talking to key broadcasters about providing them with its software which is designed to sort and manage information.

The company is understood to have been in touch with the big players in the digital television industry, including British Interactive Broadcasting, the interactive television company owned by BSkyB, BT, Matsushita and Midland Bank. Maid hopes broadcasters will

use its InfoSort search technology to enable consumers to sort and personalise information in an interactive environment. InfoSort is an automated search system that files and organises material online.

BIB formed earlier this year, will allow viewers to access and use a variety of services including home shopping, banking and leisure activities.

Dan Wagner, the company's founder and chief executive, announced results for the six months to the end of June roughly in line with expectations. Maid reported a pre-tax profit of £2m against a loss of

£3.9m the year before. However, the figures were battered by the sale of a hotel Internet business to the US Internet access provider, 4th Communications Network.

Excluding exceptional credits, Maid made a pre-tax loss of £1.7m, although Mr Wagner said the company was still on track to make a genuine profit for the full year. "The trend continues in the right direction towards profitability," he added.

Mr Wagner, who has an 18 per cent stake in the company, added that Maid would continue with its strategy of forming alliances with big players

such as Microsoft and CompuServe to "dominate the market for retrieval of electronic business".

A product developed by Maid for CompuServe in the US, which gives the business community stock prices and company profiles, would be launched in the UK later this year, the company said. More details of a project with IBM are also due to be announced in the next few months.

Shares in Maid fell 5.5p to close at 209.5p, in part as a response to analysts' concerns that the churn rate - when customers fail to renew subscrip-

tions - had gone up. One analyst said that while joint ventures were picking up, the core business was losing momentum.

Maid announced that it had acquired a 70 per cent stake in Muscat, a company which owns information retrieval technology for £5.6m.

Muscat, based in Cambridge, will enable Maid's InfoSort technology to be installed on personal computers, and will enhance searching capabilities for a variety of Maid products. Muscat's clients include Virgin, Net, Cascade Systems, the BBC and Reuters.

Independent advisers' network fined £100,000 over pension sales

Nic Cicutti
Personal Finance Editor

The Personal Investment Authority, the financial regulator, yesterday underlined its aim of speeding up the payment of compensation to victims of the pensions mis-selling scandal by announcing a fine of £100,000 against M&E, a network of independent advisers, over its failures to act more swiftly.

M&E was also ordered to pay a further £25,000 in costs. The fine, first revealed in *The Independent* last month, is the

largest to be imposed so far, although a larger one against DBS, another network, is expected to be announced soon.

The PIA said the fine was imposed after a visit by its monitoring team to the firm's Leeds office last year showed M&E had delayed contacting clients who were potentially mis-sold a pension. This, the regulator said, was a "serious failure".

Barry Kayes, chairman of M&E Network, which represents 646 advisers working for some 325 firms throughout the UK, said he was "disappointed"

at the scale of the penalty.

It had been imposed not because of any serious mis-selling by his group's members but through the refusal of the company's indemnity insurers to permit letters to be sent to those eligible for a review.

The firm had identified 368 mis-selling review cases and completed assessments on 309, of which only two required compensation.

M&E's penalty follows a crackdown by regulators and the Government on firms involved in the mis-selling scandal.

A believer in permanent evolution, not revolution



John Castle: A rare outsider at Taylor Woodrow

The Trap: to continue to do the same thing and expect a different outcome. This little homily, the sort one might expect from a set of management consultants, sits on John Castle's mantelpiece at the elegant Mayfair offices of Taylor Woodrow. It is not a motto, Mr Castle insists, but three months into his new role as chief executive of the construction to property group, it is clearly a trap he hopes to avoid.

He certainly has a hard act to follow. Colin Parsons, Taylor Woodrow's executive chairman, has built up a formidable reputation during his tenure, knocking into shape a group which was in crisis when he arrived from running its Canadian operations in 1992. In five years, Mr Parsons has turned a £94m loss into profits last year of £67m and has overseen a share price which has more than doubled. It is an impressive turnaround in an industry which has been under the cosh. Even so, given that the group is still making meagre net returns - less than 6 per cent on sales of £1.2bn last year - there is clearly more for Mr Castle to go at.

His strategy, illustrated by some deceptively simple management school diagrams, is permanent evolution, rather than permanent revolution. There is going to be no reinvention of Taylor Woodrow in the way Lincas and Wimpey reshaped themselves by swapping house-building assets for quarries. Although some would characterise Taylor Woodrow as the conglomerate of

Taylor Woodrow's chief executive says getting out of construction would destroy the conglomerate, writes Magnus Grimond

the sector, spanning construction, house-building, property and an equipment leasing operation, Mr Castle says he has inherited a strong platform in four fairly stable businesses: "There is nothing in any of our sectors where we say, 'God, this is so awful we must close it down'."

This cautious approach is understandable, given that Mr Castle is a rare outsider in a company which normally recruits its bosses from within. Indeed, three years at the head of Marley in the early 1990s is the nearest he has been to the building industry, but that was tiles and plastic pipes, rather than bricks and mortar. Otherwise Mr Castle's has been an eclectic career, taking in a period in a technology-transfer-venture-capital business, along with Textron of the US and BP.

So he arrives without the sentimental attachment to construction that many in the industry appear to display. But even construction, the sick man of Britain's industrial sector, remains sacrosanct for Mr Castle. Despite years of massive losses or minimal profits, he has quickly arrived at the conclusion that to get out of construction would be to destroy Taylor Woodrow. "It would be a revolutionary change. If we were to think about it, it would have to be done over a very long

period of time. I don't see why we shouldn't be able to manage construction just like any other business."

He says it must generate value and it must not fall foul of the Rolls-Royce syndrome - "the view that we are going to build the best aero engine, even if the company goes bust". But to many outsiders, this will look like a platitude to cover the very trap into which the whole industry has fallen, with managements nearly everywhere still wedded to a barely profitable business which is crying out for rationalisation and consolidation.

Under the Castle regime, construction will be stripped down and rebuilt around its "core body of talent" to forge it into a single operation, bringing together the disparate groupings which have grown up over the years. Over time, the reliance on the business will be diluted, so that in five to 10 years Taylor Woodrow will be a housing and property group that dabbles in construction, rather than the other way round, he says. The hope is that in this state, Taylor Woodrow will be able to ride the troughs of the industry without having to resort to marginal businesses to fill the gaps, as in the past.

Property is another business which does not appear to fit particularly well with a trading group such as Tay-

lor Woodrow. The City measures property companies by their assets and that is difficult when they are mixed in with operations judged on earnings. The group has been running down the investment side of the operation, which tends to be asset based, in favour of the development side, where short-term profit and loss is more important. This evolution will be continued by Mr Castle, who believes property will continue to underpin the group's balance sheet, thereby giving hefty financial backing to bids for big construction projects and contracts under the Government's Private Finance Initiative (PFI).

The PFI is something the construction industry will have to live with, he reckons, and he is encouraged by Labour's enthusiastic adoption of the Tory idea. "I've been very impressed with what they have done. They have cracked in on it good and hard and picked up on issues which were worrying the industry."

Elsewhere, Mr Castle faces fewer problems. The house-building side is riding an upswing in two of its markets, in the UK and California, even if Australia remains in the doldrums, and Greenham Trading, a supplier of everything from hard hats to lavatory paper, chugs along nicely. Certainly he has no illusions that the current

housing market buoyancy is anything other than a temporary phenomenon and that, apart from sales to the over 60s, this is a market lacking fundamental growth prospects. What he does believe is that there is no reason Taylor Woodrow's housing arm cannot be run with the same focus on shareholder value as a specialist house-builder.

The "tidying up" phase at Taylor Woodrow will be complete within a year, Mr Castle believes, with another year to see it all shake down. But he recognises that rationalisation will extend beyond the boundaries of the group.

To illustrate his point that there are too many companies operating in the construction industry, he points to the fact that Taylor Woodrow, one of the largest, has a mere 2 per cent market share. The process of consolidation has begun, he says, but in the future it is more likely to come through changes in the way construction is managed and operated, rather than through reductions in the amount of assets deployed. Indeed, once some focus has been put back into Taylor Woodrow's construction operation, it is very likely that he will be seeking to take part in the consolidation process himself through acquisitions.

But while the City remains sceptical about construction, those smart uplands look some way off. Mr Castle may have to deploy his skills to their utmost to negotiate the traps that lie ahead.

business

F&C sidesteps exchange pains

The appointment of former Chancellor Ken Clarke as a non-executive director of Foreign & Colonial Investment Trust rather than over-shadowing its interim results yesterday. That was a shame because after a dismal showing last year, F&C looks back on track.

Net assets per share in the six months to June rose by 16 per cent to £2.11n, or 195.4p a share, against an 8.5 per cent rise in the FTSE 100 index. A healthy exposure to the buoyant US market helped even if, at home, F&C's contrarian, value-based investment strategy meant it was underweight in the financials and pharmaceuticals that drove the Footsie.

A reflection of that strong asset growth was a 14 per cent increase in the half-time dividend to 0.8p and a final payout of at least 1.65p. A total of 2.5p is promised, an 8 per cent rise over last year.

Apart from poor stock selection in the UK, the main problem last year was F&C's exposure to the strength of sterling, common to internationally diversified investment trusts. This time, taking out loans in European currencies allowed F&C to enjoy rising stock markets without the pain of exchange rate falls. The policy netted £9m.

Looking forward, F&C's new manager, Jeremy Tighe, refuses to be pushed off course by last year's poor performance and promises to continue the strategy that has served investors so well over the years.

The emphasis will be on maintaining a position in the strong US market. That may make some investors nervous but it is probably the right approach given the seemingly virtuous circle of strong growth and low inflation characterising that economy. Despite indifferent performance from Japan, he is also sticking to that country's world-class exporting companies.

He is testing out new emerging markets such as Russia and Romania and focusing on Latin America, where he sees much better value than in the overheated tiger markets of the Far East, and on continental Europe, where stock markets certainly look much better value than the UK.

Whatever you think of F&C's strategy, it is hard to argue with its long-term performance. Between 1945 and the end of last year, £1,000 invested in Foreign & Colonial, with net income reinvested, grew to be worth almost £1m. Putting that same £1,000 in a representative portfolio of UK equities would have resulted in a fund worth £250,000, while stashing it in a building society would have given you just £18,000.

That is as strong an argument for long-term investment in an actively managed fund as it is possible to make. The attraction of F&C at the moment is that you can buy that sort of potential growth at an 8 per cent dis-

THE INVESTMENT COLUMN

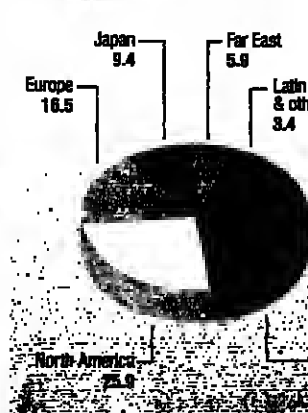
EDITED BY SAMEENA AHMAD

Foreign & Colonial I.T. At a glance

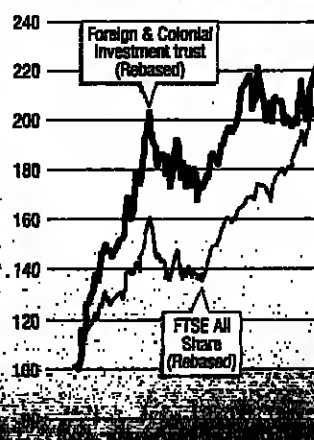
Market value: £1.85bn, share price 179.5p

Trading record	1994	1995	1996	1996	1997
	Full year		Half year		
NAV per share (p)	134.7	190.7	188.4	168.8	195.4
Earnings per share (p)	2.18	2.41	2.91	1.83	1.89
Dividends per share (p)	1.88	2.07	2.28	0.7	0.8

Geographical distribution of assets



Out performing the market



count to the underlying value to the shares in the portfolio. If sterling weakens, as the Bank of England forecast this week, international investment trusts will have their day again. This is a good time to jump on board.

Hanson builds on US operations

Hanson may only be the building materials rump of the recently demerged former conglomerate but it still has a big company ego. It reports quarterly results like a Unilever or BP and releases them at lunchtime to fit in with New York time to satisfy its large group of US investors. Quite a show for a company which is now principally involved in just bricks and aggregates.

Though the demerger happened in February there remains some tidying up to do and yesterday's third-quarter results continued the process.

Hanson is changing its year-end to December to fit in with the rest of the sector. So the key numbers yesterday were the six-month figures to June

reported on a pro forma basis. These strip out figures from the Energy Group, which was demerged in February.

These numbers showed a 9 per cent increase in operating profits to £121m and pre-tax profits of £48m. These were struck after exceptional items of \$49m, which included a hefty write-off for the sale of Hanson Electrical to CinVen.

But though Hanson remains bullish about prospects, the outlook seems mixed at best. On the plus side, work to re-jig the portfolio is continuing. Talks on selling the Grove Crane business in America are continuing though yesterday the company said it had taken no final decision to sell it. Also in the US, the Cornerstone aggregates business is going well, buoyed by rising demand and increased government spending on road construction. It is in America that Hanson is likely to expand as there are 4,000 aggregates businesses there, most of which are single quarry operations.

But the news is less rosy in the UK where the operations have seen a "battering" of demand in recent weeks. A particular concern is the Government's road review which has already seen two big road schemes scrapped.

Hanson shares have had a strong run in the last few weeks, rising from 280p to 328p. They lost 24.5p on profit taking to close at 304p yesterday and on full-year operating forecasts of £253m they trade on a forward rating of 11 falling to 10. About right.

Micro Focus finds safe pair of hands

New management, but the same recovery story, was Micro Focus's line yesterday. The computer software company was at pains to dismiss the surprise replacement last month of Marcelo Gurmucio, hired as chief executive to turn the company around less than 18 months ago.

Rumours have it there was a board bust-up over an acquisition Mr Gurmucio favoured. While the share price fell heavily on news of that departure, the new chief, Martin Waters, met the City yesterday and came across as a safe pair of hands with oodles of experience in IT.

Happy that the management software shuffle had not knocked recovery off track, shares in the group rose 22.5p to 2,162.5p. Compared to a net loss of £9.4m in the second half of last year, the company turned in profits of £3.5m for the six months to July on revenues ahead 21 per cent ahead to £41m.

Revenues for the second quarter were 24 per cent ahead of the first, traditionally the group's toughest period, with product licensing revenue up 40 per cent.

The legacy of Micro Focus, which has suffered from poor product marketing and poorly targeted spending on research, means there is plenty of tightening up to do. Anthony Muller, vice president and finance director, aims to improve operating margins at the company from around 11 per cent to 15 per cent by the fourth quarter.

As a world leader in Cobol, the language of most mainframe computers, the company looks ideally placed to meet demand to solve the year 2000 problems which require rewriting of the Cobol language. The company's products, which allow computer lines to be rewritten on personal computers rather than on mainframes, where capacity is limited, look attractive.

If there are any questions it is whether, once the company has evened up its revenues and spending and the year 2000 has passed, customers will find an active use for Cobol.

Micro Focus insists that because it is such a fundamental system, Cobol has wide uses, including exploiting the Internet.

Merrill Lynch forecasts profits of £16.4m for the full year and £27.7m in 1999. The shares are on a forward PE of 31 times next year, falling to 19 times in 1999. Fair.

Pint-'n-panatella wielder wins confidence of trust

Ken Clarke has just accepted a job that will pay him £18,000 a year for turning up to a board meeting once a month.

Okay, so the pint-'n-panatella wielding former Chancellor will also be on call to Foreign & Colonial Investment Trust to offer advice on finance and economics.

Still, its not exactly selling the *Big Issue* outside Waterloo Station. Our Ken, the best Prime Minister we never had, has got his first post-Number 11 job - as a non-executive director at F&C.

Mr Clarke is on holiday in the US - the first he's had since 1979, according to Jeremy Tighe, manager of F&C. "Robin Leigh-Pemberton, the former Governor of the Bank of England, is on our board and he knows Ken. Our chairman, John Slater, approached him after the Tory leadership election," Mr Tighe said.

How very cosy. Now to the serious question: Are F&C directors allowed to smoke during board meetings? Mr Clarke is a confirmed chain-smoker of pungent cigarillos, after all. Mr Tighe says: "None of the current directors do - although some of them smoke outside board meetings. I'll have to ask the chairman about this."

Mr Clarke starts his new job on the 1 September when he returns from his summer break, although the first board meeting isn't until 10 September. Not to worry, Mr Tighe is sanguine about the markets: "We're not expecting a crash or anything."

The first casualty of the Boeing-McDonnell Douglas merger has been Boeing's European network of public relations consultants. In all, the Seattle aircraft manufacturer is dispensing with the services of 10 PR men including, in this country, the estimable Dick Kenny.

Mr Kenny was the voice of Boeing in Britain for two and a half decades and the man every aviation hack contacted whenever a jumbo fell out of the sky or a multi-billion pound order was in the offing. He does not intend to shut up shop, he tells me. Dick Kenny Associates will continue in business at Little Pinkneys, its Maidenhead HQ.

"Boeing opened a lot of doors to me over the past 26 years and some of them might just prove attractive to others," he says.

Anglian Water's John Smith has been appointed head of regulation at Railtrack. A bit of a "poacher turned gamekeeper" scenario this, as rumour has it that Mr Smith spent most of his time at Anglian complaining about Ofwat, the water regulator.

Now he will be dealing with Railtrack's two regulators, which rejoice under the Pooterish titles Office of Passenger Rail Franchise and Office of the Rail Regulator.

Perhaps Mr Smith could look into a right mess that Railtrack has got itself into. It has decided not to renew the lease for the Southall Railway Centre in west London, leaving the GWR Preservation Group nowhere to show its vintage trains. Railtrack wants to use the train sheds involved to house the Flying Scotsman and other rolling stock owned by Dr Tony Marchington, chief executive of Oxford Molecular Group.

PEOPLE & BUSINESS



Kenneth Clarke: F&C isn't sure whether smoking is allowed in the boardroom

There was good news this week for the Southall railway huffs - Railtrack has given them a six-week stay of execution. But surely Mr Smith can help find them a permanent home?

Has *Sunday Business*, the newspaper founded by Tom Ruythoff last April that recently went belly-up, finally found a new owner in the Barclay brothers?

The owners of the *European* are known to be interested in acquiring newspapers. Bert Hardy, managing director of the brothers' company, European Press Holdings, tells me that he has indeed given *Sunday Business* the once-over: "We have been sent details by the receivers and we are examining those details," Mr Hardy said yesterday.

He says he doubts he is any further forward in deciding whether to buy the paper than any of the other groups sent the details by receiver David Sapte, of City accountants Begbies.

There is one reason to doubt a sale is imminent. Last Friday Mr Sapte embarked on a three-week holiday abroad. Or is he happy negotiating by mobile from the beach?

Perhaps it's all this humidity - BZW is hiring as if the heat has gone to its head. It has appointed Chris Gale as new head of European Proprietary Trading within the global equities division. Mr Gale, 33, joins from Bankers Trust where he was head of UK Arbitrage Trading.

Barclays' investment bank has also poached three analysts, Nick Ward from NatWest Securities, Keith Wilson from Sun Alliance Investment, and Susan Scott from Credit Lyonnais Securities. Mr Ward will cover transport, Mr Watson electronics and Ms Scott oil.

John Willcock

Free Printer Offer Extended Buy Now!

Family PC

£29 Per Month

2 Years Interest Free Credit

£999 + VAT

£1173.83 inc. VAT

166 MMX™ Intel Processor

32Mb EDO RAM

3.2Gb Hard Disk

33.6 Voice Modem

EPSON colour inkjet printer

FREE

0% Finance

Quality Software Bundle Offer Extended Until 16th August

Family PC PLUS

01282 777 111

TIME COMPUTER SYSTEMS

IN BRIEF

Littlewoods to create 500 jobs

Littlewoods is creating 500 jobs as part of an expansion of its home shopping division in Sunderland. This was scheduled to bring the total number of employees at the Littlewoods customer service centre in Sunderland to 1,500, the company said. There has been a "huge" uptake by customers of the company's new Index Extra catalogue and it has seen a healthy increase in sales in its traditional agency catalogues.

Media Business posts record profits

Media Business Group, the media and advertising specialists, announced record profits of £15.5m in the year to the end of April, an increase of 26 per cent on a turnover of £134m. Gross billings rose by 26 per cent to £155.4m, well ahead of the 9.2 per cent overall growth in the UK advertising market. The new year had started strongly, chairman and chief executive Allan Rich said yesterday. The group also confirmed it was setting up an office in Scotland. A one-for-10 share consolidation is planned.

Capita pays £9.3m for Datapay

Capita, the management and IT consultants, yesterday paid £9.3m in cash for Datapay, IBM UK's payroll processing service, funding the purchase by placing 3.46 million shares with institutional investors at 269p each. The new business and its client base of 140 companies will quintuple the size of its pensions and payroll service to include 2.4 million employees and pensioners. Datapay made an operating profit of £775,000 on revenues of just under £7m in 1996, and the acquisition will be earnings-enhancing in the current year. The shares rose 4p to 273p.

Glynwed buys US pipe-maker for \$23m

Glynwed International, the engineer, has bought plastic pipe-maker Industrial Plastics Technology in the US for a maximum of \$23.6m (£15m). IPT distributes industrial pipes, fittings and ancillary components throughout the eastern states of the US. It had a sales turnover of \$32.4m and adjusted pre-tax profits of \$3.44m in 1996. Earlier this week Glynwed said it would look for acquisitions worth up to £100m as part of a strategy to reshape the group.

Barr & Wallace name change approved

Barr & Wallace Arnold Trust shareholders yesterday approved a name change to Trust Motor Group and gave the company authority to buy back up to 15 per cent of the company's shares. They have passed an ordinary resolution approving the sale of the leisure division to Wallace Arnold Group Ltd, a management buy-out vehicle backed by investment capital group 3i.

Share-buying spree by Orbis directors

Four of the directors of Orbis, the security services group, and each of the group's three divisional managing directors yesterday purchased 115,543 shares. Chief executive Trevor Brentnall said over the past two years earnings per share had more than doubled and the return on investment had increased by nearly 50 per cent. "We are confident the group will continue its progress," he said.

Company Results				
	Turnover £	Pre-tax £	EPS	Dividend
Freemove Group (Q3)	4.8m (1.3m)	2.38m (2.00m)	-0.81p (-0.40p)	nil (-)
Jacobus Holdings (Q)	28.8m (27.7m)	1.03m (1.75m)	0.8p (2p)	0.5p (0.275p)
MANO (Q)	14.0m (3.22m)	2.01m (3.22m)	0.85p (3.85p)	nil (-)
McDonnell Info Systems (Q)	54.4m (51.2m)	-3.9m (4.2m)	2.82p (0.29p)	nil (-)
Media Business Grp (Q)	134m (108m)	1.55m (1.22m)	0.42p (0.36p)	0.07p (0.09p)
Micro Focus (Q)	537.3m (528.0m)	57.85m (514.4m)	33p (34p)	nil (-)
Oranga (Q)	428.8m (255.5m)	-73.5m (-125m)	-4p (1.3p)	nil (-)
Westminster Healthcare (Q)	102m (55.1m)	11.8m (17.8m)	17p (23.5p)	6.8p (8p)
WPP Group (Q)	3.47bn (5.48bn)	78.3m (55.1m)	7p (8p)	0.7p (0.55bn)

(Q) - First (Q) - Second (Q3) - Third quarter

Westminster to sell off 15 nursing homes

Westminster Health Care, the UK's second-biggest nursing home group, plans to sell off up to 15 of its 105 nursing homes over the next 18 months to focus on faster-growing areas such as retirement centres and drug abuse clinics.

Speaking after the company reported a strong set of annual results yesterday, Pat Carter, chief executive, said his target for Westminster was to make around a third of its profits from non-nursing home activities by next year.

News that Westminster was broadening its activities sent the group's shares up 4 per cent to 275p. Pre-tax profits rose 14 per cent to £20m in the year to May, excluding £2.7m costs of last year's failed bid for Goldsborough and a one-off charge of £3.1m to reduce investment in the nursing home sector.

Mr Carter said that pressures in the nursing home market, which has been dogged by overcapacity and cuts in local authority budgets, were difficult, but showed signs of easing.

BASF plans plant with Algerian firm

The German chemicals and pharmaceuticals giant BASF has signed a deal with Sonatrach, the Algerian oil and gas company, to build a propylene plant next to its existing joint venture with Hoechst at Tarragona in Spain. But in London yesterday Mr Juergen Strube, the BASF chairman, ruled out a tie-up with Dow Chemicals, the world's leading polystyrene producer, due to anti-trust problems.

BASF has also decided against taking an equity stake in Gazprom, the Russian gas company, saying it would not enhance the joint marketing venture between the two companies.

BASF reported a 14.5 per cent rise in sales to 27.8bn German marks (£9.5bn) and a 5.8 per cent increase in pre-tax profits to DM2.458bn in the six months to the end of June, in line with analysts' expectations. Earnings grew more rapidly in the second quarter than the first and the group expects to increase profits and exceed sales of DM50bn for the full year.

Profit margins in the first half were hit by the strength of the dollar, in which most of the group's raw materials are priced, according to Mr Strube. Profit contributions from oil and gas, colorants and finishing products were sharply higher, but plastics and fibres showed lower profits. Knoll, the loss-making pharmaceuticals division, has been hard hit by heavy research and development costs and an immediate return to profit is unlikely.

كلنا من اولاد

[illegible]

FINSTAT - instant PC access to Financial Times Statistical data.
For further information, call Leanne Gilliar at FT Information
on +44 171-825-8430 or email: leeanne.gilliar@ft.com

UNIT TRUST GUIDE

هكذا من الاصل

sport

It is all very well for Hussain to campaign for a tougher line but in making a case for verbal abuse he is on dangerous ground

A pretty obvious truth about the present series of Test matches is that Australia are better at batting and bowling. They are tough competitors, too, but nobody should run away with the idea that this matters more than technical accomplishment.

I mention this because England's vice-captain, Nasser Hussain, appears to believe that a strong case can be made for bad-mouthing the opposition. In a passage from a book serialised by the *Daily Mail*, he wrote: "In the last three Cornhill Tests we have not shown the same mental strength as the Australians."

Referring to county cricket, he added: "No one is sledging anyone... the gap between this cosy lit-

tle world and Test cricket is immense. The Aussies are at us all the time both physically and verbally... they are abusing you, rucking you, making it very clear that they want you back in the pavilion pretty quick."

As any number of past Test players will testify, sledging in cricket is not a modern phenomenon but to make public a clash between romantic legend and the reality of today's sporting life is to my mind irresponsible. It lays bare the bitter truth that sport is not what a lot of people imagine.

A veteran professional footballer once explained, with great simplicity and patience, some facts of life that had been kept from me. "Be

careful," he said, "because there are people out there who won't think twice about doing you harm."

It is not hard to guess that there are many influential people in sport who resist the idea that a performer can afford to be compassionate. Be first is their abiding philosophy.

Bearing this in mind, you are bound to wonder sometimes what sport will look like in the future. Will it be more about attitude than performance?

Following a defeat at Arsenal on Monday, the Coventry City manager, Gordon Strachan, spoke honestly about where his team stands in the wider scheme of things, which will probably again come



KEN JONES

down to whether it can survive in the Premier League. "We can be fairly good," he said, "but only if the players work hard and have the proper attitude."

Seen from a distance, this applies

to at least half the teams Coventry will come up against. Moderate ability, maximum effort and not much in the way of inspiration.

It is a description that can be applied, in the main, to the efforts of England's cricketers. A fine line in good fortune here and there but when serious questions were asked they were not good enough.

Even the best cricket brains seem unsure about the answer to this but to suppose that it rests entirely with a more militant approach sets a bad example to the game's next generation.

Frankly, I have long since rejected the idea of sports events as a matter of life and death or even a reason for disturbed sleep. Doubt-

less this does not fit in with popular thinking, but I am comfortable with it.

Most people who get angry about sport do so in the absurd hope that it will bring about improvement. It is a childish mechanism and they are usually disappointed.

A conclusion arrived at personally is that the steady application of organised publicity is as damaging to British sport as the removal of team games from school curriculums. It increases pressure on the performers and sets up victory as the only worthwhile objective.

A worrying thing about Hussain's remarks is that they gained the immediate support of two past

England captains of quite different temperaments, Graham Gooch and David Gower. Bearing in mind that Gooch would like to hear national anthems played before Test matches, it makes you wonder what cricket is coming to.

This week saw a vulgar outburst on the field at Chelmsford when Essex and Glamorgan met for a place in the NatWest Trophy final. Stoking up hotter and hotter fires in the players will lead inevitably to repeats of that incident.

It is all very well for Hussain to campaign for a tougher line but in making a case for verbal abuse he is on dangerous ground and should be called to account by the authorities.

CRICKET: Warwickshire cruise to fourth NatWest Trophy final in five years

Sussex succumb to Donald

JON GULLEY

reports from Edgbaston
Warwickshire 342-3
Sussex 237
Warwickshire win by 105 runs

Faced with the prospect of scoring 300 in 49 overs when they resumed their rain-affected semi-final against Warwickshire, Sussex were never in the hunt here yesterday, losing wickets too frequently to stand a realistic chance of overhauling the home side's formidable 342 for 3.

Only if someone could have emulated Rajesh Rao's phenomenal efforts for Sussex against Derbyshire in the quarter-finals, when the 22-year-old newcomer produced a match-winning 158, were Warwickshire even remotely likely to be denied their fourth NatWest Trophy final in five years.

No such innings was forthcoming and, while Mark Newell (79) and the captain Peter Moores (45) did their utmost to take a degree of respectability back with them to Hove, the winning margin of 105 runs accurately reflected the superiority of the home side.

The left-handed batsman David Hemp deservedly col-

lected the man of the match award for his unbeaten 111 on Wednesday, although the match-winning performance in yesterday's segment was contributed by Allan Donald, whose final delivery clattered into Moores' leg stump as Sussex capitulated to the first half of the 54th over.

The South African pace bowler - who will give way to Brian Lara as Warwickshire's overseas player next season - hit the stumps three times on the way to figures of 5 for 37.

Kept in reserve until yesterday by the acting captain, Neil Smith, Donald began Sussex's downfall by bowling Bill Athey in the fifth over of the morning. Rested after five overs, he returned just before lunch to claim Mike Newell as his second victim and then took all three wickets to fall in an afternoon session lasting little more than 20 minutes, giving himself time to catch a flight home to South Africa last night to receive a Presidential Sports Award gold medal from Nelson Mandela.

After losing Athey, Sussex made their task more difficult by suffering their second run-out. Mike Newell changed his mind about a run after a push to point, leaving Neil Taylor stranded half-way down the pitch as Trevor Penney's throw hit the stumps at the non-striker's end.

Taylor's departure brought in Keith Newell to join his brother, but he was bowled by the left-arm spinner Ashley Giles after the pair put on 49 in 11 overs. Vasebert Drakes, a big hitter who might have given Warwickshire cause for concern, lasted only 15 balls before he was caught at deep midwicket by Hemp off Smith's off-spin.

Moores and Mike Newell ensured that the contest would at least continue after lunch by adding 45 in eight overs but, when Donald returned, Newell stepped away to attempt a forcing stroke and was beaten for pace, Sussex's last, remote hopes



Warwickshire's wicketkeeper, Keith Piper, celebrates with Allan Donald after success in the NatWest Trophy semi-final against Sussex yesterday

Photograph: Empics

disappearing with his off stump. With neither Paul Jarvis nor Amer Khan equipped to survive for long as Donald completed his haul, Neil Smith, elevated to one-day captaincy in the absence of both the injured Tim Munton

and Nick Knight, was soon enjoying his 10th success in 11 matches in that capacity. Essex will need to be on their mettle to deny Warwickshire another celebration at Lord's on 6 September.

Robert Croft, the England and Glamorgan off-spinner, has been fined £1,000 and warned as to his future conduct by his county after his confrontation with Essex's Mark Hott during Tuesday's NatWest Trophy semi-final.

Best make their mark with record spree

Mike Rowbottom looks back on an extraordinary evening in Zurich where the statisticians had a field day

Long after Wednesday's Weltklasse meeting had finished, the Letzigrund Stadium - emptied of 20,000 people - bore a single testimony to the extraordinary events of preceding hours.

The digital clock by the finish line remained fixed on the 5,000 metres time Haile Gebrselassie had recorded in setting the third world record of the night - 12min 41.86sec. The more one looked at it, the more improbable it appeared.

Zurich had witnessed history in the breaking - never before had this flagship of a grand prix meeting produced more than two world records at a time. The only comparable occurrence in recent times came 12 years ago in Oslo, when Steve Cram, Said Aouita and Ingrid Kristiansen set new marks in the mile, 5,000 and 10,000m respectively.

The names of Gebrselassie, Wilson Kipketer and Wilson Bot Kiplagat - Wednesday's record breakers in the 5,000m, 800m and 3,000m steeplechase - will be forever linked by virtue of their collective performance on a muggy Swiss evening.

"Everything was perfect - the weather, pace and crowd," said Wilson Kipketer after surpassing the oldest major record in the book, Seb Coe's 16-year-old 800m mark of 1:41.73, with a time of 1:41.24.

Of the three, he was the only one whose race was against the clock, and after he had been paced through 400 metres in

48.10sec - a second faster than Coe had travelled in setting his record in Florence in 1981.

Recalling the moment when the pacemaker dropped away from him during that run, Coe said: "The response of the crowd at that moment is like nothing else. In a stadium such as Oslo, Brussels, Zurich or Crystal Palace, they know the situation, what you're going for, and the reaction coming out of the darkness is a magic moment, a surging push in the back."

So it was for the naturalised Dane as he advanced on gazelle legs towards the prize he has had in mind for two years - and the additional world record bonus of \$50,000 (£33,000) and a 1kg gold ingot.

Zurich, with an annual budget of £2.5m, can afford the best. When the best perform, they get a reception which very few other venues match. The acoustics of the stadium are such that the air seems to buzz with noise, most particularly on the terracing within the V-shaped stand beyond the finish line - athletics' version of the Kop.

Wilson Boit, who lowered the steeplechase mark to 7:59.08, had company until the last 30 metres, when he broke clear of two fellow Kenyans, Bernard Barmasi and the man who had set the world record on the same

track two years earlier, Moses Kiptanui.

Gebrselassie did his damage over the final 200 metres to shake off the challenge of the 5000m world champion, Daniel Komen.

The Kenyan, who finished with a Commonwealth record of 12:44.90, confirmed yesterday that he will race over 1500m at Gateshead on 7 September.

He will be joined by fellow Kenyans Kiptanui, who will run in the steeplechase, and the world 10,000m champion, Salty Barsosio, who is down for the 3,000m.

Coe was not the only Briton to lose a record on the night. In finishing second to Hicham El Guerrouj in the 1500m with a time of 3:28.95, Fernán Cacho of Spain beat Steve Cram's European mark of 3:29.67, set as a world record in 1985.

Dave Moorcroft, chief executive of the British Athletic Federation, also lost his European record of 13:00.41 in the 5,000m, where Dieter Baumann of Germany, in fifth place, recorded 12:54.70.

To round off a night for statisticians to cherish, there were also two world junior records for Kenyan athletes - Noah Ngeny, with 3:34.54 in the 1500m, and Japheth Kimutai, just 16, who ran 800m in 1:43.64.

Leeds lose captain to ban

Rugby League
DAVE HADFIELD

Two players have been punished for high tackles with bans that will rule them out for the rest of the Super League season.

The Leeds captain, Gary Mercer, has been suspended for five matches for a late, high tackle on Bradford's Graeme Bradley last Sunday. The disciplinary committee said that the tackle had carried "great potential for serious injury".

Mercer, who was called up on video evidence after being placed on report during the

match, will miss the last four matches of the season - beginning with the match against the London Broncos on Sunday that could decide second place in the table - and the first round of the Premiership play-offs.

The suspension will not help his prospects for a new contract at Leeds: the former New Zealand Test player has already been linked with a possible move to Halifax.

The Oldham hooker, John Clarke, has also been banned for five games after being sent off for a high tackle which left London's David Krause with a broken nose last Tuesday.

Clarke was also found guilty of fighting, although the two clubs have avoided punishment for the wider battle that ensued.

The British Amateur Rugby League Association has halted plans for a competition bringing together top amateur clubs and those from the First and Second Divisions of the professional game as a potential breakthrough.

"The competition, if approved by the two bodies, will open up pathways and opportunities for ambitious amateur clubs throughout the country who wish to opt for professional status," Barla's Ian Cooper said.

THERE ARE PLENTY OF STAR NAMES IN THE PREMIERSHIP
SHEARER BECKHAM FOWLER WRIGHT ZOLA BERG KAMPER DINANDSON
OLSESSAMANSCHMEICHEL GIGGS COLE BERGER MC MANAMAN LOMBARD
DOOVER MARSGINOLAPISTONESHERRINGHAM BERKOVIC

Then again, there are names in Serie A

RONALDO **BAGGIO**
ZIEGE **KLINSMANN**
BOKSIC **DEL PIERO**
DUGARRY
BATISTUTA
ZIDANE
KLUIVERT

The World's best. Performing in Italy... Appearing in a newsgate every month for just £2.75 or to subscribe call 01454 620070

TEST YOUR SKILL IN OUR EXCLUSIVE ITALIAN FANTASY FOOTBALL LEAGUE GAME - full details in August issue

The time and money game



Grant Dalton, Merit Cup skipper, reflects on his win in the Fastnet Race and looks forward to next month's Whitbread Round the World race, when he will write for the *Independent*

The pressure on the syndicates preparing for the start of the Whitbread has suddenly increased following a Fastnet Race that raised more questions than it answered. Both time and money are at the heart of it and there may be a few unpleasant bullets to be bitten, some courageous decisions to be made.

Merit Cup was first into Plymouth, but it wasn't first out as teams scurried away to start a whole new round of testing and catching up.

We have been in this situation before, in the 1989 pre-Whitbread Fastnet, with the maxi Fisher & Paykel against Peter Blake's Stealagier. We went round the rock and were run down big time, and by big time I mean an eight and a half minute lead turned into a two and a half minute loss, but knowing in our heart of hearts that we had a serious downwind problem.

It had to be addressed. We knew that if we didn't we would be suffering badly in the Whitbread. The net result of it was

we had to improve the boat considerably, tossing the entire sail wardrobe out, and starting again.

But we never quite caught up because to do that we would have had to make up six months not only of the work which our rivals had put in place, but six months of our own history and we had just six weeks to do it in.

In the end we were on the pace with them, but we never had the sparkle they had. I think some of the Whitbread teams are finding themselves in that situation now, and I am not saying we are not one of them, that we are the hot ones and the others are not. By no stretch of the imagination is that true.

But we had planned on continuing development and all the Fastnet Race win has confirmed to us is that the development programme is at least on the right track, rather than having to come to terms with the thought that it might be on the wrong track, throw it out, and take a new direction.

Any campaign between now

and the start on 21 September would have had a lot of work on. Sailing with sponsors' guests, maybe fitting a new rig, we will have our second boat arriving to do some side by side testing. Many will have engineering work to do, perhaps replacing keel bulbs, tidying up glitches in the mechanical and electrical systems.

Having to fit in an additional performance analysis programme, develop new sails and modify boats, will all have to be crammed into an already tight schedule. They will also have to be paid for out of budgets which may not be as elastic as everyone needs. The only thing which everyone should have equally is the flexibility of management approach which is always necessary in running a campaign of Whitbread complexity.

But the extra problems are those you can do without as the prospect also looms of having to invite the scrutineers on board to make sure you have complied with all the rules. Every bit of kit may have to be

measured to make sure it meets specifications, and when, for some, a favourite bit of work on a secret weapon is thrown out, there is the time lost, the money down the drain.

The options at this stage are normally pretty limited and the only things people would be playing with would be sails, keel bulbs and masts. In the main that means lighter masts and lighter keel bulbs, though keeping the favourite shape, and perhaps still looking at the mix of sail shapes and weights that gives you maximum cover and speed over the widest range of wind speeds and the angles at which the boat is sailed.

The Fastnet crystallised our thinking in particular areas, like light air sails. Our fto of Kevin Shoebridge, Mike Sanderson and Micky Ickert, the ex-Team New Zealand America's Cup designer who has also been consulted by Lawrie Smith, are working hard on that as we take the boat to Belgium this weekend. That is business, but next weekend a visit to the motor rac-



Dalton: Boat's development is on the right track

ing grand prix should be more pleasurable.

We have some pressure on us, too. We know we are not fast enough at this point to win the race and I believe both Chris Dickson's Toshiba and Smith's Silk Cut could beat us. The worry is that they still have more to pull out of the bag, that they are not as deep into their development programme or into what they think are achievable targets as we are. So we are going to have to work really hard.

The bonus from winning the Fastnet was that, of the top four boats, we were the only ones who had not sailed Whitbread 60s before. We started in March and in five months we can probably say we are on the pace. So we have been pleased to see the hard work, thinking and meetings paying off. That is a credit to the guys.

Disciplined Daly takes early lead

Johnson criticises slow players after 68

Sciandri goes flat out for recognition

Rusedski finds touch

Celtic track German

Hereford bullish about future

Armstrong underlines Primma's class with smart success

REGISTER TOMORROW
Win the ultimate prize
A trip to the 1998 World Cup Final.



Independent Fantasy Football League

THE INDEPENDENT

0891 525 075
Calls cost 50p per minute at all times. A product of TMI Ltd.

